Stories Of The Patriarchs

Stories from the Lips of the Teacher.

STORIES FROM THE LIPS OF THE TEACHER, RETOLD BY A DISCIPLE. Being the PARABLES OF JESUS, told with that fulness of detail of time, place, habits, dress, and scenery which serves to place them before children (and adults hardly less) with vividness and force. By REV. O. B. FROTHINGHAM. *Frontispiece* and *Vignettes* (eleven) on wood, by ANDREW, in his best style. Published in square 16mo. 90 cents.

"Mr. Frothingham has given to this work the inexpressible charm of his own vivid imagination and affluent and graphic style, in rendering these most beautiful and deep apologues of the Divine Master, and attempting to make the New Testament a more living book to the young people of this day." — *Salem Register.*

"The Parables are so retold as to absorb the attention of the reader, and to fasten upon the mind what the writer believes to have been the moral impression which the Saviour meant to convey. It is in style and thought a superior book, and will interest alike young and old." — *Zion's Herald (Methodist).*

"We are charmed with the book; so will all be, both young and old." — *New York Commercial Advertiser.*

"The writer has evidently discovered how to write for children. His style is simple and clear, without being weak; and his moralizing is healthy and earnest." — *New Jerusalem Messenger.*

"They will open a new world of meaning and of thought to the young." — *Christian Register.*

"We cordially commend the book to every family." — *Norfolk Co. Journal.*

"A good idea admirably carried into effect." — *Manchester (Eng.) Herald.*

"A work of culture and taste; it will be welcome to all ages, and gives the sublimest lessons of manhood in the simple language of a child." — *Springfield Republican.*

WALKER, WISE, & CO., Publishers.

STORIES

OF

THE PATRIARCHS.

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

AUTHOR OF "STORIES FROM THE LIPS OF THE TEACHER, RETOLD BY A DISCIPLE."

BOSTON:
WALKER, WISE, AND COMPANY,
245 WASHINGTON STREET.
1864.

UNIVERSITY PRESS:
WELCH, BIGELOW, AND COMPANY,
CAMBRIDGE.

PREFACE.

AN old arrangement of the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament divided the books into two general classes, the prosaic and the poetical. We are fast allowing this distinction to fade away, and are coming to view the whole collection as a collection of poetry, produced out of the imagination, and addressed to the imagination; the literary form being narrative, historical, philosophical, fanciful, the interior substance being spiritual. We are no longer shocked or irritated or grieved by the statement that the Bible is a book of symbols, in which the truths of life are not literally stated, but are figuratively suggested; and in which the outward experiences of men and women, of tribes and nations, are made representative of the inward experiences of the soul. We are familiar with attempts at discovering an inner sense beneath the fantastic phraseology, and are reconciled even to the rejec-

tion of the apparent, in the interest of the real meaning. Once we shuddered at the bare idea that anything that was told in the Bible was not literally true; now a very large class of believers, and those too reckoned peculiarly "spiritual," rejoice in believing that the greater portion is not literally true, and was not meant to be taken as true. This change of view has come about gradually, as the Bible has been better understood and more wisely appreciated; and as a rational use of it has taken place of a dogmatic or controversial use of it. But it cannot be denied, rather it should be gratefully confessed, that this wholesome change is due largely to the influence of Swedenborg, and his doctrine of correspondences as applied to the Word.

An eminent Swedenborgian writer says, in effect, that children especially should be grateful to the Swedish seer, because he has made the dark and dim old book a picture-book for them. A charming idea; and one which the children, if they knew it was shaped, would clamor loudly to have produced. It is hard that such a fair promise as that should be held out, and then left, not only unfulfilled, but unremembered. Why has not some believer in that most imaginative of faiths, his poetic faculty aroused, or even created in him by his

religious system, taken Wilkinson's fine hint, and introduced the young people to the treasures of Divine wisdom through these crystal gates of imagery? Is it that the science of correspondences has eclipsed their beauty, or that the work of justifying the doctrine to the understanding has left no leisure yet for its pleasing exhibition to the taste? If so, we hope the time will soon come when the science shall be established beyond question, and the children, young and old, shall have the attractive side presented to them.

The writer of this little book is not a Swedenborgian; he is not familiar with the Swedenborgian vocabulary or rules of interpretation. He is not prepared to assent to the doctrine that the Hebrew Scriptures contain one or more hidden senses, or that, if they do, the sense is the same, and designedly, systematically, by inspiration, the same throughout. He loses, therefore, the immense advantage that a member of the New Jerusalem Church would have. But he did think it wrong that the children should miss wholly the wealth of the old Bible teaching, as it lay concealed under the fanciful symbols. Thinking so, he considered that even a little of it, faintly apprehended and feebly presented, might be better than none, and he undertook, in a series of Sunday-

school lessons, to tell the Old Testament stories in a way to interest his young hearers, and to give them at the same time a glimpse of the noble thoughts they hid behind their veils. A few of these have been written out, and are here printed. It will be seen at a glance that they are connected by no thread of ideas, and are grouped with no view to the systematic unfolding of truth. The hidden sense has been drawn out in accordance with no consistent principles of interpretation, and has been presented in a practical, not at all in a doctrinal form. The moral rather than the spiritual meaning has been sought for, this being the meaning which his little auditors could best, if not alone, apprehend.

At the same time, it will be seen, that even when he seems to be telling the story for entertainment, in the most vivid style of fancy, he is doing something more. He is conveying a thought, pressing a precept, urging a principle, illustrating a fact in the heart's experience, unveiling a truth of Providence or of life. He thinks the little book will harm nobody; he hopes it may teach a few. If it will not, it may provoke a more gifted person to make a better one, that will.

CONTENTS.

THE GARDEN.

THE old people who lived ages and ages ago, before our history books were written, tell in little scraps of poetry of a wonderful garden that long before their day existed in the strange, vast land of Asia. They had not seen it, nor could they say exactly where it was. All they seem to know about it is, that it lay away off in the east towards the sunrise, — yes, farther east than the sunrise, among the lovely hills of the dawn, which seem always to be bathed in the sweet, pearly light of the earliest morning, before the sun came up to scorch the

globe with heat, or to fling long black shadows on the ground. The people who lived farthest east pointed still eastward to the place where this garden was.

In those very ancient times there was less travelling than there is now from one part of the globe to another, and people were ready to believe almost anything of places they had never seen. But for a good while travelling has been the fashion; almost every spot on the face of the earth has been visited; and no spots of the earth have been visited so eagerly as those where this garden was supposed to be. It has been sought for everywhere, even in directions where there seemed no chance of finding it. Asia has been searched all over, and if any such wonderful Eden existed, surely it might have existed there; but there it was not. Some foolish people thought they had come to it in Tartary; others were confident of discovering it in Africa, out of sight among the shiny ebony men. Then there were those who hunted all up and down the countries of Europe, from Greece and Spain and Italy to Norway and Sweden. If you will believe it, a few even fancied it was in

America; and I, for my part, am persuaded it is as likely to be there as anywhere; but it did not appear. Far off on the banks of the Ganges, in the heart of India, in China, in the gorgeous island of Ceylon, in hot, spicy Arabia, in Persia, in Syria, in Armenia, by the Tigris and Euphrates, by the Red Sea, the Caspian Sea, by Pharpar, Abana, and the Jordan, among the Mountains of the Moon, sharp eyes were looking many years for this lovely abode. One is sure it was here, another is sure it was there; but the general belief is, that it never has been found, and never will be found; in fact, a great many are of opinion that it never existed at all, except in fancy. I am not of their opinion.

Of course, as nobody had seen the garden, nobody could tell what it looked like; and for this reason, people imagined it must have been exceedingly beautiful, and said all the fine things about it they could think of. There were no weeds or briers in it, they all agreed in saying; the roses had no thorns, the bees had no stings, the glittering, gliding snakes had no poison in their tongues. Flowers of every variety, without planting or transplanting, watering or trimming, bloomed in the

open air all the year round, for there were no chill autumn nights or wintry days; the soil was never too wet nor too dry; the vines trailed of themselves along the ground, or twined round the trunks of the trees, making natural arbors and screens, some flinging out odors from their blossoms, and others letting down great clusters of luscious grapes within easy reach of the hand.

The bushes were loaded with delicious berries, which never were thinned by picking; big golden melons gleamed like globes of sunshine in the grass. Dates, olives, oranges, and figs grew in the utmost abundance; the air was perfumed with sweet gums, and filled day and night with music from the singing of birds, the voices of animals, and the fluttering wings of insects. There were beasts of every kind, but they were harmless and beautiful; they frolicked together in the groves, laughing and shouting, their great eyes bright with joy, their splendid skins glorifying the landscape. The huge red lion sported over the hills with the kid, the graceful leopard was fond of play as a kitten; there was no sound that was not pleasant to hear, there was no sight that was not pleasant to see; every form was grace, every hue was loveliness.

The hills sparkled with torrents, which danced down their sides, and made in the valleys the most fascinating lakes and fountains; and four mighty rivers rolled along through the vast plains over sands of gold and beds of pearl and diamond.

In this garden lived a man and a woman; and they, like everything else there, were beautiful in form and feature, sweet, pure, and happy. They had nothing to be afraid of, and nothing hard or disagreeable to do; all they wanted was given to them without labor. Like the lilies and the fowls, they neither sowed nor reaped nor gathered into barns; they neither ploughed, dug, nor watered: fountains quenched their thirst, the earth poured its fruits into their lap; they needed no clothing nor fire to keep them warm, for it was always summer; when they were tired, they lay down to sleep on beds of flowers; they did not know what pain was or sorrow; tears were never in their eyes; clouds were never on their brows; they were never sick, and never sad, but were like innocent children, passing their time wandering up and down, chatting with the beasts and birds, whose language they knew and spoke, and drinking in the creation

always fresh and new. They never thought of yesterday or to-morrow: each day had joy enough for itself; such a thing as duty they never heard of: delight was their whole duty. They asked no troublesome questions about their birth or their death, the place they came from, the place they lived in, or the place to which they were going. They did not know anything about reading and writing, arithmetic, geography, history; and they had not the least idea what it was to know about such things, or about anything: they thought, so far as they thought at all, that the grass and the water and the lilies were alive just as they were, that the sun was a beautiful being who came to visit them every day and make them happy, just as the other creatures did: the stars they imagined were fire-flies which they could never catch; the wind was a strange something with wings, that came to breathe on them when they were heated, but which never stood still long enough for them to see it. They dreamed of no heaven; for heaven means a place happier than the earth, and they never fancied there could be a happier place than their garden; indeed, they never thought whether they were hap-

py or not: they were too happy to think about it; there was no more nor less to the beauty and joy and good that they had; existence was all one perfect summer day. Dear, simple creatures! They had no notion of ugliness. They had no notion of right and wrong; their consciences were folded up like unopened rose-buds; and as for their souls, if you had spoken of them, they would not have understood you.

Thus they lived, so these old people said, for many years. Little children came and clustered about them, like grapes on the grape-vine, looking just as mellow and luscious as the sun shone upon them, their voices musical as birds, their eyes bright as the dew-drops. How large this garden was these grown-up children did not know: they had never found the end of it; they never came to a wall or a hedge: perhaps this was because they never went far, and had no curiosity to explore the thickets or to discover secrets. Their minds were not as active as they became afterwards.

For one day it chanced that they struck a woodland path which they had never seen before, and followed it hour after hour till evening; then they

lay down where they were and slept, having no sense of fear; in the morning they rose again, and followed still their path as it opened in lovely vistas before them, supposing that, like all the paths they knew, it would bring them back at last to the middle of their garden. But it did not: still it went on and on, and they pursued it, but they began to feel for the first time a sense of distance, of remoteness, of something beyond. A kind of awe fell on them, a sort of trouble, as if they might be losing themselves in the wide world. More and more eagerly, as this feeling grew in them, they pressed forward, till presently there rose before them what seemed a vast curtain let down from the skies. They drew near to it, it was nothing but darkness; but it was darkness so thick that it stopped them as if it had been a wall. Unable to go farther, they stopped, and looked about them. On either side, as far as they could see, right and left, the wall stretched out; above it had no top. What should they do? should they turn back? It was plain they must; and at last they did, after trying in all possible ways to look beyond the veil. But when they turned back, it was with a feeling

they never had had before, — a feeling of disquiet which was wholly new. They could think of nothing but the wall, and of what might be behind it. They talked of it all the way home; they lay awake at night thinking of it; they lost their desire for food in their hunger for this knowledge which was shut out from them. They reached home safely, but it was not the same home any more. Their eyes, sad and thoughtful, took no delight in the fair scene. The whispering of their minds would not let them hear the sweet singing of the birds. Their children came smiling round them, but they could not smile in return. The animals came for their caress, and were frightened away by their gloomy looks. The wonderful garden, which had seemed so boundless until then, began to look narrow and dark to the poor children; it did not give them what they wanted, as it used to. The sun shone less brightly, the stars were cold. They were tired of their innocent life; tired of the flowers and fruits, the soft verdure and the running streams. They found fault with the beautiful things which had given them so much pleasure in former days. What had seemed hand-

some seemed hideous, what had seemed green and fertile was dry and bare; thistles scratched them as they walked in the groves, they pricked their fingers with thorns as they plucked the roses, the pomegranates were tasteless, the figs were not fit to eat, the dates were sickening to the palate. They began to sigh for variety. What had come over them? The very skies above their heads changed. The heavens, which once looked as if they rested on the tree-tops, now moved far away; the breezes they had often listened to at evening, as they sat in their bower at sunset, and which seemed to come to them with sweet messages of love from some distant land, now moaned and sobbed and wailed in the tree-tops with a melancholy tone that made them cry: they feared the darkness of the wood, as if some evil spirit was in it to harm them: yet the heavens were as near to them as they ever had been, the breezes always moved as gently over the earth, and played among the palms as lightly and sportively; and the cool shadows of the forest hid no ugly or wicked thing. Poor children! the shadows were in their own hearts. They were discontented because there was

something which they could not have, and to have everything else was no joy while they had not that.

All things displeased them now. Why have we not coats, they said, as gay as the peacock's, as soft as the swan's? Why should the cockatoo and the dove be more splendidly adorned than we are? Let us dress handsomely too. So they caught the lovely birds that came near them trustingly, and pulled out their plumage, strung the feathers together by tendrils of the vines which they dragged down from the trees, and decked themselves in the finery. Alas! at this rate the beauty of their garden would soon be ruined, for the birds were frightened and flew away into the groves. It was not long before ill-feeling grew up between the human beings and the animals; the beasts fled from them in fear, the lion roared when they approached him, the tiger showed his white teeth, the deer scampered away into the thicket, the rabbit ran into his hole. Once they had great amusement and delight in the serpent, in his graceful folds, his shining scales, his forked tongue: now they hated the serpent, and tried to kill it. Because they had lost

their love for the creatures, they fancied the creatures had lost their love for them: yet they had not; they were as innocent as ever, and as playful. Nature was the same; but they were not the same. They were unhappy, and everything was unhappy with them. They could not forget the dark veil they had seen. It seemed now to meet them at every turn; whatever path they took, it seemed to rise over them and shut them in. Their sweet garden gave them no more pleasure than a wilderness. They moved from one part of it to another, hoping to find in change the happiness they had lost; but they did not find it; if anything, they felt less at peace the more they roamed.

One day, to their great surprise and joy, they came to a tall gateway opening in the dark wall, and leading through it to another world beyond: yes, another world, a new world: they caught but glimpses of it through the opening, just clear enough to kindle their fancy and desire. Should they pass through? For a moment they hesitated. Their garden had been so beautiful; they had passed in it so many blessed days. They turned and gazed on it with longing, loving looks; tears sprung to

their eyes. The woman said: "Let us not go; let us stay here; perhaps the old happiness will come back again if we stay: look once more; listen to the far-off murmur of the river; it is complaining because we leave it. What if we never were able to find our path back again! we do not know what may be beyond there; it may be some terrible thing!" To which the man replied: "No, no! let us go on now; you know how long we have been trying to find a way out of the garden, and shall we not use it, now it is found? We may not find it again if we go back; we need not go far on the other side; and how is it possible that we should lose sight of the gate? For my part, I don't care if we do. I am tired of this place. Whatever we find, it must be better than what we leave. Come, let us go; we shall see what the sun sees up in the sky; we shall see what the tree-tops see in the distance, — rivers to which these are brooks; flowers to which these are weeds; mountains to which these are mounds; new and more wonderful trees; fresh fruits, delicious to the taste. O, come, come. This may be our last and only chance; if we lose it, we may grieve all our lives long. Come,

wife, come, children, we are going to a glorious country."

They went. The gateway was narrow and long; but at the end of the passage shone the undiscovered mountains. Soon they approached the opening: they eagerly ran forward; they passed it; they issued forth, and found themselves in a new world indeed. A vast plain stretched before them, edged with wild hills and overhung by a gray sky. Dense, gloomy forests skirted the horizon; but no date-trees, no olive-trees, no almond or fig trees were to be seen; no sunny fountains were playing; no graceful animals were sporting; a bleak wind blew across the plain, and, as it touched them, gave them a sensation they had never known before, — the sensation of cold. They shivered and shrank into themselves, and instinctively turned to go back into their garden. It was gone. It had vanished: no trace of it could be found; no wall, no gateway, only a huge blank was behind them. They were alone in their new world.

"What a sad story!" you will say. Yes, my dear children, that is what all people say when they hear it told. What a sad story! what a foolish

pair they were to leave their lovely home! what a cruel pair! For if they had remained in their garden, we might all have been there now, we and our children: we should never have been thrust upon this bleak world; never have had sickness, or pain, or sorrow, or work. Who knows? We might all be now as happy as they were at first. And yet, dear children, will you believe me when I say, that these very people who think it such a shame that the man and woman left the garden, and took their children with them, have done the same thing themselves, — have themselves left the very same garden, because they were tired of it or driven out of it by their own desire?

But how, you will say to me, is that possible, when nobody ever succeeded in finding the garden, when it disappeared from the sight of the only two persons that ever were in it, so that they could not find it five minutes after they went from its gate? How could people have been in that garden who never travelled from their homes? How could one be in it without knowing he was in it, or go out of it without knowing he went out? What do you mean by saying that all men and women do what

the first man and woman did? I mean this, my children: that all men and women were children once, and children live, or should live, in the world just as those early people lived in the garden. Every man's and every woman's life begins in Eden; every child lives a little while, some a very little while, in Paradise. It does not know it at the time, but afterwards, on looking back, it knows, and sighs.

I could tell you of a time, long ago now for me, when the world was no bigger than my nursery; then it grew as big as the whole house, nursery, parlor, and kitchen; then it took in the yard, the garden, the street; by and by it was as large as the village: but the roads that went away from the village seemed to go out of the world. The heavens seemed just above the house-top, and I could think of no better Father there than my own father and mother. The wind was a whispering of spirits in my ear. The brook which ran through the village sung a sweet song all day. I had no work to do, but was taken care of, just as the lilies are. Where the food came from, the meat and vegetables and fruits, I did not know, and I

never thought to ask: they always came; every day, fresh water, pure milk, sweet bread, were set before me: angels — who else could have done it? — brought oranges, apples, figs, dates, raisins; at night a bed was made for me to sleep in, and the kindest of hands smoothed my pillow under my head; in the morning I was met with smiles, and all day long I had nothing to do but enjoy the sunshine, the air, the grass, the toys that were thrown into my lap, the picture-books, rocking-horses, dolls, and games which I neither made nor bought. All things loved me: the dog, which was a parlor wolf, and the cat, which was a nursery tiger, came and played about me without doing the smallest harm: the canary-birds sung to me; the doves cooed; the hens and chickens ate their food from my hand. Summer and winter were equally pleasant to me. When it was cold out of doors, the summer came into the house; a great bright sun rose in the fireplace and shone there all day long; the flowers bloomed in the parlor; soft furs like the fox's skin kept out the frost. Sometimes it happened that I was fretful, discontented, disobedient; then my beautiful world became dark; I did

not enjoy the sunshine, or the flowers, or the pleasant walk; my food was bitter; there was no smile on the face of my mother, and no music in the tones of her voice; the kitten ran away from me frightened; the canary moped on his perch; I flung my pets away from me; I broke my toys; O, how miserable the world seemed! I felt as if everybody in it hated me. But the fretfulness passed off, and all was bright again. I was in that garden a long time, and how I got out of it I do not exactly know. I think I must have been carried out of it; for suddenly, before I knew anything about the matter, I found myself outside in the great world, and, strange to say, a little child was sitting on the floor, playing with her kitten, seeming to feel just as I used to feel in my garden. For my own part, I could never find the way back into the garden; and if I could, I suppose it would not be a garden any more, but only a nursery or a kitchen, which I should want to get out of as soon as I could, and go to my study or my workshop down in the dusty street, to find the beautiful things which my little girl thinks are dropped down from the skies. She, dear little heart! is in

the garden, and long may she be there, with that in her pure little bosom which shall keep it in bloom the whole year round. Lovely be the flowers! soft the kittens! delicious the plums and peaches! sweet the song of the canary! gentle her night's sleep! joyous her day's sport! kind her teachers, playmates, and friends! and when the gate opens for her to pass out into the wide, wide world, may she have something in her heart which will make that a garden too!

THE GARDEN.

OUTSIDE THE GATE.

COLD and bleak and desolate and lonely: strong winds blowing over the plains; mighty mountains rising all around; the icy gleam of the ocean in the distance; no bright birds now; no gay flowers; no delicious fruits springing up to their lips from the ground, or dropping into their mouths from the trees; no sheltering bowers; no tender bed of grass; no perfume of gums or spices. The little group clustered together like frightened deer, and

gazed with wild looks on the scene before them. They could not stand long thus; for they must live, and in order to live they must labor. So the young people went off in search of berries and goat's milk, and the elders scratched in the ground for roots. They found a large and comfortable cave to live in. They began to till the soil a little, and in time vegetables and herbs grew, which they learned to eat with good relish. As the wild beasts came round their cave with angry looks, they made weapons to defend themselves, and when they had killed an animal, they made clothing from the skin. Thus in the course of years they made a new and spacious home for the family. They had crops of grain; they had herds of sheep and cattle: the children grew up to be men and women, and had children of their own, and many a household, healthy, strong, and happy, occupied the little huts which were scattered on the sunny hillsides or among the pleasant valleys. Early in the morning the inmates, blithe and merry, rose from their beds of skins or of sweet boughs, ate their simple meal together, and went out to their work. All day, in sunshine and in shadow, they pastured their flocks,

cultivated their corn, trimmed their vines, or fished in the rivers. At evening again they met to talk over the day's labor and tell what had been done. Sometimes, when they sat thus in groups round their fire, the old people — very old now — told wonderful stories about the Garden they lived in once, many years ago, before most of them were born. Tears came into their eyes as they recalled that delightful past, their voices trembled, and more than once they asked their children and grandchildren to forgive them for yielding to their curiosity, and wishing to know what was outside the gate. They were very sorry they had lost the paradise for themselves, but much more sorry they had lost it for their children, who must now toil and suffer from cold and hunger and pain of body. They had hoped year after year that they might find the beautiful place once more, and go in with their dear ones; and often at night, when the rest were asleep, they had wandered by moonlight over the spot where they were certain it had been; but they saw nothing. Once or twice it seemed to them as if swords were waving in the air like streaks of flame; but that was their fancy,

perhaps, or it might have been the glimmer of the moonshine, or the flashing of the strange lights which often appeared in the north.

When the old people spoke in this way, their children gathered round them and begged them not to be sorry. It could not be helped now, and, besides, it was better as it was, perhaps. Their parents ceased to be happy in the Garden, and there must have been some good reason for that. If they became tired of it, what should prevent their children from becoming tired of it too? "And we are never tired of life now," said they. "We are very happy now, and never tired. Our work is pleasant; we have all we want, and we enjoy everything the earth yields, for we labor for it and earn it with our own hands. What should we do if we had no flocks to tend, no corn to cultivate, no flowers to raise from the ground? The days would be very tedious without our occupations. And think how many pretty things we have which you did not have. Think how many things we can do which you could not do. You had no comfortable cabins; you had no beautiful garments of skins; you had no pleasant fireside; you could

not fish, nor hunt; you could not force the good things to come from the ground, nor make the animals serve you as we can."

But all the children did not feel so contented at being shut out of the Garden. One in particular, the oldest of all, — a man full-grown, whose name was Cain, — never ceased to complain of it. He was angry with his parents for their folly and cruelty, as he called it; he was angry with his brothers and sisters, because they were happy; and he was angry with the Being who made them for inflicting so heavy a punishment for so light a fault, and for punishing the children for the fault of their father and mother. His looks were surly and savage; his voice was harsh, his words were bitter. Often at night Cain might be seen alone at midnight, looking for the gate that could never be found, and for the waving swords of the Cherubim, and when he came in in the morning, he was pale and haggard, his eyes were wild, his hair was tangled, and he went out to his day's work with a curse. Cain was a farmer, but his farm did not yield large crops; farms never do, unless they are cultivated in a cheerful spirit. The weeds grew

fast there; mildew fell on the grain, the fairest pastures were covered with stones; the walls were broken down by the cattle, birds came and devoured the tender fruit. There seemed always too much sunshine, or too much rain, or too much drought, or too much wind, or too much something else. The only thing there was really too much of was, discontent and anger and ill-will and impatience and ingratitude. Cain said that his fields were unfruitful, because God did not like him. The fact was, they were unfruitful because he did not like God, and would not use the beautiful gifts of the ground and the sunshine and the air and the water and the seed which God gave him. He was angry, and so he was idle and careless. Of course everything about him went to ruin and waste.

Cain had a younger brother, named Abel, who was very different from himself. Abel was as pure and gentle as Cain was dark and fierce. He was a loving, grateful, cheerful, and sweet spirit. He bore no grudge against his father and mother; he did all he could to make them happy; he took his life just as it was, and found it full of good things.

He asked for no pleasanter garden than he had; and day by day, as he went to his work in the sunny morning his whole heart swelled with joy and love at the generosity of the great Giver. Abel was a shepherd; on the far-off hills he pastured his sheep and nursed them as if they were little children; driving away the wolves that prowled about them, and protecting them from the cold night-dews. They increased in numbers fast. They were fat and fleecy; no diseases came near them, and they all loved him too dearly to wander away from the fold.

On the top of a pleasant hill Abel built an altar, and every year he chose his fattest sheep, the one he was most proud of and loved the best, killed it and burned it in a fire which he made on the altar. He did this because he felt better for doing it. It was an act of gratitude to the good Being who gave him all he had; it was his New Year's present to the Lord. As he saw the flame and smoke rise to the heavens, he felt as if a piece of his own heart was rising to the dear Father above, as if he had shed a little of his own blood and burned a little of his own being. He was as happy as a

child who gives to its mother the prettiest thing it can think of, and spends all its little pocket-money for a Christmas token. Cain laughed at Abel for doing this, and called him a fool. "What use is there in all that?" said he. "Do you suppose your sheep will be any fatter or any more numerous because you kill one of them and burn it on a pile of stones? Will that keep the wolves off or whiten the fleeces? For my part, I would have nothing to do with a God who wished me to kill my darling lambs. I should hate him. To raise them is hard enough, without having to shed their innocent blood."

"But I do it because I love to do it," replied Abel. "I do not know whether there is any use in it or not. I do not care whether there is any or not. I do it to show my love, not because it is useful, but because God bids me do it, or wishes me to do it, or is glad to have me do it. It makes me glad, and that is enough. It satisfies my own heart, makes me feel happier." "Makes you feel happier!" retorted Cain. Worse and worse. Makes you feel happy to kill your little innocent lamb! If you did it because you could not help doing it, I might

pity you. If you do it because you like to do it, I can only despise you for being a simpleton. Abel made a gentle reply to this violent language, and tried to persuade Cain to do as he did. "You will feel better for it," said he. "I am sure you will feel better for it. Bring some of your choicest fruits and your most fragrant flowers in their season of bloom, and, instead of enjoying them yourself, let them waste away, thinking all the time of Him who made them rich and beautiful. Pray that you may feel the sunshine in your heart; try to feel it there: giving a lovely gift to God will help you to love him; will help you to be happy and grateful; then you will go to your work with a bright spirit; you will enjoy it; you will do it well, and it will succeed. It does not succeed now, because you are sad; and the sadness in your own bosom is worse for your fields than a cloud all over the sky. Do, dear brother, do try my way, and be happy." He pleaded long and earnestly, till Cain at length consented to bring the offering, only to please his brother, or perhaps not to please him so much as to displease him still more by showing him that it was a foolish thing to

do, that it would not make him happier or better, nor would do anything to make his fields more fruitful. With a sullen look, and an expression of scorn on his face, he gathered his flowers and fruits and vegetables, not the choicest he could find, but the first which came to his hand; he built his altar carelessly; loosely piled the sticks upon it, and touched the wood with the fire. It would not burn. The wood snapped and hissed and sputtered, the sparks flew out, the smoke rose black and heavy and rolled darkly away, but no flame could be seen. He blew it with his breath, to create a blaze; but the blaze would not appear. "There," said Cain, bitterly, "you see how it is. Your God does not like me, and will not take my present. He only likes the weak, silly, simple people like you, who praise him and flatter him and are thankful for the smallest favors, and think that whatever he does must be perfectly right. I am bold; I dare to think for myself, and to say what I think. I dare to tell him that he does not give me all I deserve; that he is unjust in driving us from the Garden, because our father and mother had more curiosity than pleased him; that he is

not good, and does not merit our worship. He does not like me very well. I can do without him, I suppose."

"O brother! brother!" cried Abel, "for heaven's sake, do not speak so! It is not his fault that the fire does not burn on your altar. You did not wish it to burn. Look at it. The wood is not properly arranged, and it is green beside. The altar is not carefully built, so that the air can draw through the sticks. How can it burn? Mine would not burn better if I took no more pains than you have taken. You have brought no love to your sacrifice. You have not even chosen your finest fruits and flowers, but have taken those which you would as lief lose as not. Brother, I told you that would do no good. If the fire burned ever so brightly, it would do no good."

"I believe you," rejoined Cain; "it would do no good if the fire burned ever so brightly. It is all a piece of foolery from beginning to end, and I will have nothing more to do with it." At that he raised his hand and began tearing the altar to pieces and scattering the brands abroad. Abel begged him to stop, and as he went on, seized

his hand and tried to push him away from the place. But Cain was the stronger of the two, and grew stronger every minute with the rage that was in his heart. "Out of my way!" he shouted. "Let me alone! Take care of yourself! If I strike you, it will be dangerous!" They wrestled there for some minutes by the altar, till at last Cain, with a stick he held in his hand, struck Abel a blow on the head, which stretched him stiff and motionless on the ground.

It was the first time that the sight of a man dead had been seen on the earth. Death had never touched a man or a woman before. It had never been thought of, and now that Abel lay on the ground just as the slaughtered sheep lay, Cain did not understand what it meant. He knelt down on the ground by his brother's side. He called him, but got no answer; he looked into his eyes, they gave back no glance; he took his hand, it was like a stone; he shook him, there was no movement; he lifted him from the earth, but he could not stand or sit; he shouted in his ear, but there was no sign of hearing. Then he stood and looked at him terrified, and a dreadful feeling

came over him. "Brother!" he shouted. "Where are you? Come back! come back! Where are you?" He looked around, as if he expected to see him by his side or standing behind him. He looked up, as if he expected to see him in the air: from the air, from the trees, from the ground, he seemed to hear voices calling to him, and saying: "Cain, where is thy brother? Cain, where is thy brother?" So terrible became the place, that he could not stay there. He ran away to his home. Night came, but no Abel. "Where is thy brother?" said his wife. "Cain, where is thy brother?" said his old father and mother; and their voices echoed on his conscience and went sounding on in the depths of his soul, "where is thy brother?" He went with them to the spot where the dead man lay in his blood. They wept over the body; they washed it; then they made a great fire and burned it to ashes, as Abel used to burn the dead sheep.

And a great fear came over Cain, lest he should be killed. But there was no danger. All but his wife and children ran away from him in horror, and left him alone, and they would have run away,

but they dared not. His father would not see him; even his mother hid her face as he came near; the animals fled at his approach, frightened by his gloomy looks. He was a man accursed and abandoned.

And Cain said to his wife and children: "Come, we must go away to another country, where they do not know us. And away they went. They travelled day and night among strange people, taking no rest. On the evening of the fortieth day they unloaded their beasts; they pitched their tents; they took out their utensils; they cooked their food, ate, and drank; and Cain said, "Here they will not know us; here we will stay and live." They slept; and in the morning, Cain rose early and went out. The sky was clear, the air sweet and still; the ground was covered with the fresh verdure of grass, and was scented with the odor of flowers. Cain drew a deep breath, and said: "Ah! here I shall have rest. Here none will know me, none will fear me, none will shun me. I will live in peace among my fellow-men." Scarcely had he spoken, when the sky clouded, and from the cloud a voice seemed to say, "Cain,

where is thy brother?" The breeze began to stir in the trees, and as it reached him, it sighed "Cain, where is thy brother?" The ground beneath him shuddered, and uttered a deep groan, "Cain, where is thy brother?" He met a little child; it hid its face at the sight of him, and ran away. He met a woman on her way to the well, singing, her water-jar on her head; she looked at him, flung down her jar and fled. He met a man ploughing in the field; he left his plough, and hastened away in fear. Then Cain rushed back to his tent, roused his wife and people from their sleep, bade them load the beasts once more and go on. The journey was renewed. Through the heats of the day, through the damp chills of the night, night after night and day after day they toil on, hungry, thirsty, sleepless, pale, till they could travel no longer. They were on the shores of a great sea.

"Dost thou still hear the voices?" said his wife to him. "O yes!" he answered; "I hear them all the time. At dead of night they are loudest, but even at midday, above all the noises of the world, I hear them." "What shall we do for you?" she

said. "There is nothing to do; I must hear them till I die. And I wish I might die. I wish that somebody would kill me," and great tears rolled down his pale face and over his long, white beard. His wife tried to whisper away the voices with tender words. His favorite daughter came and sung sweet songs to him. His family came about him and talked with him long and earnestly, so that for a time he was at peace. But the moment they ceased, the terrible cry sounded again through all the chambers of his heart.

Cain could go no farther; it would have been useless, if he could; for wherever he went, he had the ground under his feet and the sky over his head and the air whispering around him. "I will stay here," he said, "here on the borders of the sea, and here I will build a city. The noise of the building will drown the cry from my brother's grave; and the walls shall be so high that the voices in the tree-tops shall not come in. The thunder shall mutter below them; the great, loud winds of the upper sky shall pass by unheard, and the boding scream of the eagle will die away above the towers. Then, perhaps, I shall have stillness in my

heart. His strong sons flew to obey his command. The sound of the axe rung through the woods. The mighty trees crashed in the forests, tumbled down the mountain-sides, lay black and vast on the plain. The heart of the hills was dug out for stone and iron. All day the din of the workmen resounded far and wide. All night the shouting of songs and the blowing of horns drowned the voices of Nature, and did their best to make a silence in the old man's heart. Stone on stone the black walls rose into the air, till they closed in the clouds and left only a patch of sky to be seen as from the bottom of a deep well. The terrible towers seemed to threaten the stars. The iron gates, ribbed and barred, opened no loophole for a breath of wind to sigh through. A profound stillness reigned over all the city. The streets were voiceless, the squares were dumb. "Do you hear the voice now from your brother's grave?" said Cain's wife to her husband. "Surely it is silent." "O no, it is not!" answered the miserable man. "It is louder than ever; for now it is in my own heart. It will not hush. Now a whisper, now a sigh, now a groan, now a roll of thunder; it sounds on in every chamber of my soul."

"In the middle of the city Cain built an altar of stones, and kept a fire burning on it night and day. Every morning and evening the tall, thin man with the sad face stood there with his offering, praying out of his wretched heart that he might die. His prayer was answered. At midnight there came a clap of thunder, a flash of lightning, — only one, — but it was the thunder and lightning of the Lord. In the morning a huge pile of ruins were seen where the city had stood. At the foot of the altar lay the body of Cain, his breast torn by the thunderbolt. It looked as if his heart had broken and given out its secret to the world.

THE ARK AND THE FLOOD.

O Cain passed away from the earth, blasted and slain by the fire of the Lord. The great city which he built passed away also. The grass covered up the stones it was made of; the bricks mouldered; the wood rotted; the iron rusted. The gray, long-bearded, sad-faced wanderer was no longer seen among men. No more did the gaunt form frighten the children by the wayside; no more did the gloomy frown drive far off from him the men and women who met him in the villages. The head, heavy with its curse, could carry the burden no further,

and was laid low in the dust. The woful, lonely, desolate life was ended.

And yet, strange to say, the man lived, and lived more terribly than ever. If you let the worms in the ground break the shell of a nut, the germs of life in the shell come out at the opening, push their way up through the sods, peep above the surface of the soil, feel the warmth of the sunbeam, feel the breath of the air, feel the moisture of the rain, grow hard and strong and tall, till in time they become a tree. Its trunk puts forth boughs; its boughs put forth branches; its branches put forth twigs; its twigs put forth leaves; the leaves rustle in the wind, and cast a broad, black shadow on the ground. In the autumn they drop off, and make the soil richer by their decay. Nuts or other seed-vessels fall from the twigs, and make the beginning there of new trees, that have their trunks and boughs and branches and twigs and leaves, which go through the same course and have the same history; so that at last a whole forest of trees springs out of the hole which the worms bored in the nutshell. Weeds grow very fast in this way, as anybody may see who has a garden.

So when Cain's body dropped into the ground, his bitter, melancholy, and hateful soul seemed to grow and spread and be active more than it had been when his body was alive. It was as if it had been set loose from the confinement of the flesh, and could go wherever it would. In the first place, this wild man had given his soul to his children, as parents always do; and while he lived he could see his impatience, his discontent, his dark passion for power, his fierce pride, repeated in the baby Cains, the boy and girl Cains, the men and women Cains that grew up about him. As he was, so were they; as he did, so they did: they would have killed their brother, if they had had one like Abel, just as Cain killed Abel. He had hated the Lord for making him work. They hated the Lord for this, and also for making their father suffer and die, for killing him with his lightning, and for throwing down the splendid city they had built with the hard work of their hands, and hoped to live in and make rich with the plunder of many towns and the spoil of many peoples. Full of rage, cursing, blasphemy, they rushed away from the black ruins, some to the north, some to the south, some to the

east, and some to the west, and mingled with other people to make them as savage as they were themselves.

These children of Cain had sons and daughters of their own, blood of their blood, bone of their bone, heart of their heart, and soul of their soul; human weeds, rank, coarse, poisonous, with harsh natures that led them to beat and bruise each other, to lie, to swear, to steal, to waste time in idleness, and make all around them unhappy. As they grew up, all these bad dispositions strengthened in them. The bad boys and girls became wicked men and women, robbers and murderers. Such people never can live together, for they would soon tear each other in pieces. They scattered as their parents had done; they went farther and farther off. They carried the seeds of Cain's hateful life to distant places, and dropped them into the hearts of pure, innocent people, where they struck root and quickly sprouted forth, to make new forests of Cains worse than the first one. The great, ugly Upas-tree looked as if it would cover all the earth.

Like draws to like. Bad people find one another

out. Bad thoughts and feelings seek, move towards, and find bad people. All the badness that was or might be in people not yet bad, crept forth and joined itself to this great power of evil that was spreading among men. Every seed was mother of a new tree. Every child was father or mother to new men and women. The deluge of wickedness was just like a deluge of water. Away up in the tops of the mountains where the river begins, you may see, if you climb so high, a tiny stream trickling out from a great heap of snow which the sun always shines on, but never melts. The stream is so little that you can stop it with your foot, and take up all the water of it in your two hands; you walk through it, and hardly see that it is there. A few rods farther along it is so wide that you must make a leap to cross it; for every pretty spring near it has poured in its bright drops of water. The women that live in the low houses hard by bring out their baskets of linen and wash their clothes in the pure brook. The brook, swelling and deepening as it goes on, foams over the rocks, ripples and murmurs over the pebbles, dashes in cataracts over the cliffs, raves through the

narrow gorges, flings its spray up to catch the light of the sunbeam, and throws from bank to bank the lovely arch of the rainbow. Men build strong bridges of iron or stone to span the torrent they are unable to pass on foot. Now the stream, strong as many horses, does a great deal of very hard work. It turns huge mill-wheels that grind corn, or saw the forest-trees into boards for houses and ships. Villages spring up along its banks, and get their living mostly from it.

The stream flows on still, and grows bigger as it flows. The rivulet becomes a river. The rains fall into it. Other brooks, from hills near or far off, pour their tides into it on both sides. Small rivers add their mass of water; fountains in the meadows give their little wealth of liquid diamonds. Wide valleys are filled with the stately flood, which now has broad hills and lofty mountains for its shores. On its bosom sail ships from distant lands, bringing rich goods from India, China, Japan. Great cities stretch along its banks. What a force there is now in the tiny brooklet that oozed out of the glacier. When swollen by the rains, it carries everything before it. It tears up

trees by the roots; it ploughs the bottom of the valleys, and sweeps the gravel miles and miles to the sea; it makes long sand-bars across the mouth of harbors, and so fills the bays with earth, that in the course of years new cities are founded on the slime it has brought down from the hills. It rushes into the ocean with such power that the color of its water can be seen in the dark green of the sea for leagues. Sometimes it overflows its banks, lays fields and farms under water, turns meadows into bogs, drowns cattle and sheep, rots harvests, floats away barns, sheds, houses, and causes a dreadful waste of property and life.

So it was with this deluge of wickedness that spread over the Eastern land, where Cain and Cain's children and Cain's grandchildren lived. It grew mighty as it flowed on. Every wicked thought and feeling, every wicked action, every wicked life, came to it as brooks from the hills come to the river. A single drop of water soon dries up. Two drops of water standing close together, but not touching, soon dry up. Eight or ten drops soon dry up; but if you draw a thin, wet line from one to another, so that they will run

together, you very soon have a stream that will not soon dry up. So the tiny drops of evil in the minds of men and women, which would soon have passed away in vapor, now mingled and joined in streams. Good men and women became bad, bad men and women became worse; children were born into badness and grew up in badness. There is no telling all the sorts of wickedness that were done. Some beat their fellow-creatures, made slaves of them, worked them in the fields like cattle, took away their wives and children and sold them as merchandise. Others raised armies, attacked their neighbors, and shed a great deal of blood in order that they might be kings. Others got immense riches, built vast palaces with gardens and grottoes, and lived in luxury while their fellow-beings died of starvation. Others let loose their worst passions, — became gluttons and sots, lived as if the earth was a huge pigsty, where they might wallow all their lives in filth. Others took to stealing, — were robbers among the mountains, and house-breakers in the city. They had no temples for worship; they brought no sacrifices; they said no prayers. If any tried to make them good, they

killed them; if any wished to teach them, they drove them away. Children were brought up to lie and steal. It would have been hard to find a family whose members lived together in love and purity.

In time the deluge became so terribly strong that nothing could stand against it. People who wanted to be honest and truth-loving and noble were not allowed to be so. They must do as their neighbors did, or starve. If all their neighbors cheated, they must cheat; if all their neighbors lied, they must lie. At first only the small, weak people, who were like the little short grass, were drowned by the flood. It did not take much to drown them; any shallow puddle would do that. Next the bushes and shorter trees disappeared beneath the water, with their sweet berries and lovely flowers and delicate fruits, — olives, figs, plums, oranges, dates. The harvests on which people fed — the useful corn, the necessary wheat and barley, the homely, but very precious beans, potatoes, and pumpkins — were covered over and destroyed. These we may say were the working-people, who yield quickly to temptation, and die by thousands

and tens of thousands. And now the flood of evil rises above all but the noblest trees. The graceful elms and beeches, and all the pretty garden trees, sink their tops beneath the surface of the water. None but the tall oaks and mighty pines thrust their leafy heads aloft, wave their foliage in the wind, and give a refuge to the singing birds; and the roots of these are fast being rotted away by the dark tide, which shut out all the air and light, and soak them with dampness. The lower hills are next covered, and none but the great hills that seem to touch the clouds show their bare summits in the sun. The blasts of wind, striking this huge ocean of sin, lift its waves high, and dash them furiously from shore to shore, so long as there is any shore, so long as any great, rocky, adamantine souls stand up to breast them, and beat back from their giant sides the awful shocks of crime and guilt; but as these, one by one, give way, as their heads go down under the boiling waters, as their watch-lights are put out, and their altar-fires extinguished, and the flood leaps and raves and roars over their graves, there is one wide waste of dark waters as far as the eye can see, — the waters of

sorrow and sin, — waters of death, in which no good, no pure, sweet, fresh, green, happy thing could live. Dead and dying souls, in dead and dying bodies, float, swim, gasp, groan, struggle with the thick billows. Some cling to bits of wood, some cling to one another, pulling one another down. Sisters drag down brothers; babes kill mothers in their embrace. Here one shouts in saucy glee; here another feasts on the good things he has saved from his house. Many who had lived down in the dirt before, like the beasts or the reptiles, seem to think it a fine thing that they should be floated up as high as they were who had lived in the sunlight on the mountain-tops. Weeds and forest-trees are about alike now; dung-heaps and granite hills are on a level. The flood of vice and crime treats one as it did another. It is a flood of disease and death to all. How they sink! How they perish! How they lie about, stranded, swollen, ghastly corpses of souls drowned in sin! How they plunge to the bottom, and then come up to the surface, hideous to behold! The most hideous of all are the corpses of the grandees, the generals, princes, kings, leaders, dukes, rich

merchants, high-priests, men of talent, who have not been able to withstand the deluge. These look like vast leviathans, lying black and broad on the dark waves; and when they go down, they make a frightful gulf, that sucks into the bottom numbers of the little ones that lie near them.

Over this dismal waste of deadly waters, rolling, tumbling, engulfing everything that has life, drowning the world of beauty, art, usefulness, knowledge, happiness; turning into bloated carcases of corruption the loveliness and the genius of the earth; — among these bodies of decay and death, that made the water thick, the *Divine man* sailed in safety and tranquillity. Before the flood came he knew that it must come, for he saw how the wickedness of men and women was increasing; he saw how hatred and lying and greediness and love of pleasure were devouring the people; he saw them carrying away the strong, the great, the wise; he saw that soon the evil would be so great that none could resist it; he saw that all who did not resist it were drowned, and he made haste to build him a ship in which he could save himself and his family.

A very wonderful ship it was that he built. We have all read in the fables of Northern Europe of the chain which the fairies made to bind the wild wolf Fenrir, who broke away from the mighty gods and burst the huge cables of iron which they twisted round his body and limbs. They twisted it round many times in heavy coils that would have weighed down a giant, but the wolf snapped them as if they had been linen threads. The fairy chain had four strands of very fairy-like manufacture. The first was the fish's breath; the second was the noise of the cat's footfall; the third was the beard of women; the fourth was the roots of rocks. Nobody could see the strands, and the fairies, as they ran in and out between the legs of the terrible animal, and jumped up and down over his huge body, seemed to be busy about nothing. But when their work was done the dreadful beast could not move a paw.

The boat which was builded by Noah, the holy man, the comforter, was not made of the same materials that the fairies used for their chain, but it was made of materials just as fine; and when it was finished, it was as difficult to see and touch as

that was. There was no iron or wood about it; no tree was cut down for it; no nails were driven; no hammer made a sound; no spinning-wheels wove cloth for the sails; no pitch was needed for the seams. If I read the story aright, the keel was faith, laid in the being of God; the timbers of the hull were holy truths; the mast was a firm and lofty trust in the heavenly will; the sails were broad and high hopes, that spread out their wings to the air; the wind was the breath of the Holy Spirit. It was loaded with good thoughts and pure affections and tender human charities; with manna such as the Israelites ate in the wilderness, and water such as Moses caused to flow from the rock.

While Noah was building this singular ship, the people that passed by laughed at him, as if it was the funniest and silliest thing they ever saw. "What is the fool about?" they cried. "Is he crazy to be spending his time in doing nothing, and pretending to be more active than any of us who toil for money and fame? Does he think he can live on the east wind, or sail through the world on clouds? The old good-for-nothing! If he were worth harming, we would kill him; if he had anything, we

would steal it!" So they went on, shaking their heads and making the air ring with their scornful merriment.

But presently the flood began to overwhelm them. Disease carried off their children. Frightful plagues swept over their cities; drunkenness bore off their strong men. No one was safe from the black torrent of death that dashed their hearts and souls and minds to perdition. Then, when everything else went down in the waves of evil, Noah put out in his strange boat, and moved over the waste of waters. The old story says, that Noah did not go into the boat alone, but took with him his three sons, with their wives, besides his own wife. Nor was this all: he took beasts of the field of every sort, clean and unclean; the clean by sevens, that is, seven males and seven females; the unclean by pairs; birds of the air, also, and birds of the earth; fowls of every description; all creatures with wings, that walked or flew, a pair of each. Reptiles, too, went in, snakes, lizards, worms, every kind of creature that crawled or wriggled on the ground. Nothing that had life, says the old story, was left out; no fly or spider or bug, or in-

sect that fluttered in the sunbeam. It must have been a very large boat, you will say, to hold so many animals. Yes, indeed, if the boat had been a common boat, and the animals had been real, living animals, with bony skeletons and bodies of flesh and blood, even the Great Eastern, the biggest boat ever built, — twice as big, probably, as Noah's boat is said to have been, — would have been overloaded before the hundredth part of such a cargo got in. But it must not be forgotten that the boat was not a common boat made of timber, but a very singular boat, "made of such stuff as dreams are made of." And I can assure you that the animals were no more real animals of flesh and blood than the boat was a real boat of beams and iron. The creatures were invisible like the vessel. Shall I say that they were spiritual animals, — that they were symbols of living things in the mind, — that the men and women whom Noah took with him were noble thoughts and pure feelings, that had been born of his fine reason and his good heart? The clean beasts were clean affections, and they went in by sevens, because they were so full, rich, and perfect; while the unclean desires, the

desires for what was untrue and unlovely, only went in pairs. The flying birds were the winged thoughts, that fly up towards the sun, or float on broad pinions above the highest mountains, or dart swiftly, soaring and singing, through the infinite depths of the blue sky, or skim peacefully over the meadows, or flit from flower to flower, and from tree to tree, on their glittering, flashing wings. The creeping things, the reptiles, snakes, and worms, were the low, grovelling, crawling, scaly, slimy, ugly thoughts and feelings, that twist and curl and wriggle, and drag their slow length along the muddy bottom of the mind, the thoughts and feelings we cannot bear to touch, to see, or even to think of. These also went into the ark, but they went in two by two, in a friendly, quiet, peaceful, loving way. They were pretty to look at, as all living things are, when they are orderly and submissive and tame, and not out of their proper place. Everything that God has made is good and beautiful, and every part of man, of his body and his mind, is pure and good and beautiful when it is in its place, and doing what it was meant to do. They are only ugly when they are doing what

they were not meant to do. So all these creeping things, which we find so hideous sometimes when we behold them crawling about in our minds and hearts, were likely enough very fair and pleasant to look at, as they buzzed and coiled about Noah's ark. There was no end of the good thoughts and feelings, the loves and truths, that his ark would contain. The fact is, that the more he put into it the more it would hold. The Bible says, "God put the whole world into a man's heart"; and if any man's heart will hold the world, with the sun and moon and stars and oceans and seas, surely that wonderful ark of Noah, which perhaps was only his heart after all, might take in those walking, flying, and creeping things without being full.

It was on these creatures, these delicious thoughts and nourishing truths, these loves so sweet to the taste, that the Divine man fed while he was on this wonderful voyage over the boundless ocean of bitter and evil waters which I have described.

It was a terrible voyage, as may easily be imagined; for there was not an hour of the day or the night when the surface of that awful, surging sea was calm. The billows, black as ink, and heavy

as iron, rolled and tumbled incessantly, flinging their horrid foam clear over the top of the vessel, and threatening to drown it every time they struck. The great winds blew from every quarter of the skies at once: they came rushing together like wild beasts; they met in mid air, roaring and howling and struggling as if they would break down the floor of the firmament and tear the universe in pieces; they seized the mountainous black clouds and blew them about like puffs of smoke, from one end of the world to the other; piled them up like huge hills, like vast castles with battlements and towers, and then scattered them till they looked like herds of phantom buffaloes or flocks of spectral sheep. The forked lightnings blazed in one flash, ripping up the vault of heaven, and letting the torrents of rain pour through the clefts of cloud in solid torrents of water. The thunder rolled its everlasting cannonade from the bulwarks of creation, and at every discharge sent forth sheets of fire that lighted up the wide wilderness of waves, and showed the broken boats, the shattered hulls of gallant ships, the shivered timbers and spars to which drowning men and

women were clinging in their desperation to save their lives; the heads and hands of people struggling with the billows, and flinging their arms up in the air in their last agony of suffocation. How the rain fell! The whistling showers, one swiftly following another, hissed in the seething foam, and went speeding away in the far distance like dark masses of vapor, hurrying over the reeling floor of the deepening deep. No wonder the waters rose! No wonder the shores receded! No wonder the dwellings were swept away! No wonder none could escape except such as had life-boats of faith!

But Noah's life-boat held steadily on. Lightning did not blast it; waves did not crush it; winds did not overturn it; rains did not find their way into it; the noise of the elements did not disturb the peace of the great soul inside. It had no direction; it was at the mercy of the Spirit that blew on it. But it moved as evenly as if it had been sailing on a smooth sea; it moved as straightly as if a pilot were steering it towards a well-known harbor.

Every now and then some gigantic form, grim,

fierce, and ghastly, with glaring eyes and knotted face and foaming mouth, muttering curses, would try to clutch the sides of the boat, that he might clamber in and save himself; but his hands would slip from the vessel, or it would already have passed before he was near enough to reach it. Most of those whom it came across tried to get out of its track, for they hated Noah and his goodness, and believed that his fate would be the same as theirs at last. Many raved at him, and howled, and did their best to drag him down with them into the wild waters. Their shrieks pierced the air. Their horrid oaths were worse to hear than the most terrible fury of the storm.

Forty days and forty nights the mystical vessel wandered up and down the savage, pathless waste of life. Forty days and forty nights Noah was exposed to temptation in the wilderness of waters, like the Christ in the wilderness of rocks and sands. What agonies went on in his soul through all that long time of tempest I shall not try to speak of; for they only can understand them who have been through something of the same kind. It was as much as he could do, I think, to keep

his patience in all that howling and beating of the elements. If there was anything bad or unpleasant or uncomfortable in him it was sure to come out. And if the old story tells the truth, there was something of that kind in him, and it did come out. When the forty days and nights were nearly over, he opened his window, and forth flew a raven; an ugly, black bird, foul and harsh-voiced, which fed on garbage, and had no song but a croak that sounded like a doleful, dismal complaint; an unhappy and melancholy and rather disgusting bird, that men hated always to hear, because it made them think of decay and death. Out he flew, croaking drearily over the flood, mingling his croak with the voices of all the other croakers who were lamenting, and cursing the Lord. He flew up and down for a long time, till, finding nothing to make him happy, he came back to Noah, who took him in, and gave him a nest in his sad and cloudy bosom. In that nest he must have died, for he never came forth again.

The next time Noah opened his window, the bird that came forth was the very opposite of a raven; it was a dove, a sweet, gentle, trusting

thing, with low voice and tender eyes. People have always thought that doves meant peace and blessing. The Holy Spirit, you will remember, came down on Jesus in the form of a dove. The timid bird, carrying a heartful of believing thoughts, fluttered awhile over the stormy waters, but found no resting-place, — no ground to light on, no tree to perch on: he flew till his wing was tired; and no kind hand was stretched out to take him, for none but wicked thoughts were abroad. So he came back to Noah as to his home. Again and again the holy man sent him forth; again and again he flew till he was tired, and came back to his nest in Noah's bosom. But every time he went out, the waters of sin fell a little; the billows were calmed; the winds died away; the blue heavens appeared beyond the clouds. The beating of his gentle wings seemed to quiet the rage of the elements, and create the world again from chaos. Presently the mountain-peaks thrust their points above the water, then the tall trees appeared, then the lesser trees, then the bushes, finally the tender grass smiled in spots of sunlight; and the beams, pouring through the

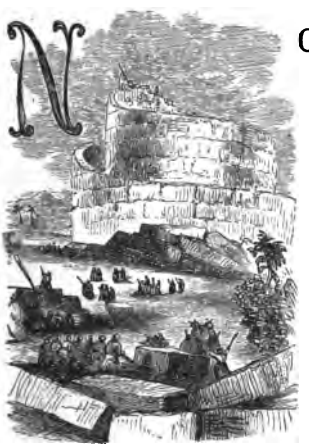
feebly dripping showers, made the glorious rainbow in the heavens. One day, the dove came back with a leaf of olive in its mouth. Noah took it as Jesus took the "comfort" of the angels in the wilderness, and knew that his temptation was ended. His boat rested on dry ground. He stepped from it upon a new and more beautiful earth, and became the parent of a new and more beautiful race of men.

It is the fashion now to say that the story of Noah's ark and the deluge is not a true story. Well, perhaps it is not a true story in every word; but it is certainly very true in every thought. There never was, perhaps, a great flood of water covering the whole earth and drowning all the men and women on the face of it. There never was a single man Noah, who put all those creatures into a boat and saved himself. But there have been a great many floods of evil in the world; they have destroyed a great many men and women; and holy men and women have been saved from their fury. In fact, there have been as many Noahs as there have been human souls, though all of them have not been saved from

drowning. There have been as many floods as there have been temptations to lie and steal and kill, and do other sorts of wickedness. There have been as many arks as there have been noble beliefs in God and duty. We are all at some time in danger of being swallowed up or swept away by the rush of bad passions that come on us with a force we are unable to resist. But if we get into our life-boats of Truth, and shut ourselves up in them, and stay there quietly, there is no deluge of lies or hates that will sink us; and if, in the midst of the storm, we send our gentle, trusting, dove-like thoughts up towards the heavens, and round among men, we shall see the end of the tempest, and come into a world brighter than it was before.

The old Bible-story is a story about you, my children. The Flood may come any day; see to it that your arks are ready.

THE TOWER OF BABEL.



NOW all men dwelt peaceably and happily together in the glorious Eastern land, — the land of the rising sun, the land of the morning, the land of light and love. They were children of the morning. Their minds were illuminated by its radiance, their hearts were gladdened with its sublime charities. They were all "of one lip," the venerable book says; which means that they all said and thought and felt the same things: there was no discord, disputing, or quarrelling among them. They were good children of the patriarch whose

faith floated him safely over the wild waters of the deluge. Simple, innocent, and pure-minded, having few wants and few pains, no doubts and no fears, they talked together like the best of friends, and prayed together like little children. They had all truth, but they had it very much as children have it from their mothers, not knowing what it is. It was very much like living in the Garden of Eden once more; but now there were a great many of them, and then there were but two. But the two could not stay in the garden, and the many could not stay in the East. They journeyed away, turning their backs on the rising sun, and on the splendors of the morning in the midst of whose joy they had been living. When they left their Mountains of the Dawn, they left behind them many things which they could not carry, and, among other things, they left the wide house they had dwelt in, the wide temple they had prayed in, the wide, high plain among the mountains where they had been used to meet and dance together, and from the edge of which it seemed as if they could look abroad over all the earth.

From this great height their course lay downward to the valleys. It was not a broad, straight path which they could all travel on abreast, or in a solid column, without breaking or dividing. It was like the path of a torrent, that has windings and turnings; now cut in two by a rock which it must go round; now scattered by many rocks over which it must leap, or between which it must glide; now crowded through a narrow gorge, and now again spread out so broad that it becomes a marsh. These people had to go through highways and by-ways; they must push through thickets; they must cross rivers; they must skirt crags; they must straggle over sandy plains. They could not keep together long as one party: some fell behind; others wandered to the right or the left; others, losing their way, made wide circuits out of sight of their comrades. The great company that started off, a solid body of people who all thought and felt and spoke alike, — who had all seen the same sights, and heard the same sounds, and eaten the same food, — soon broke up into small bands, which kept by themselves; found their own path through the forest, their own ford

over the stream; ate such food as they found by the wayside, whatever that might be, — berries, gums, nuts, dates, oranges, olives, figs; saw whatever the landscape chanced to show them, and picked up such knowledge as they might glean while they went along. They did not forget that they belonged to one immense body of people; they did not lose sight of the sunset towards which they were going; nor did they cease to believe and hope that they should all meet somewhere by and by.

How long they journeyed westward, in this way, I cannot tell; no doubt a great while; — so long that their love for each other almost faded out of their hearts, and the ties that once bound them together as a great family in their Eastern land were worn thin, and the beautiful truth they had held in common glimmered faintly in their minds, like stars in a cloudy twilight. Their noble life, their peaceful and pure and simple life, was a dim memory, and they had become interested in a thousand different objects which they had seen and heard, when at last they found themselves meeting once more in a vast shadowy plain, which

was hemmed in on all sides by gloomy mountains, — bare, black, thunder-blasted, ploughed in deep defiles by rains; their sides covered with loose piles of stones, their tops covered with glittering snow, their base fringed by hideous bushes, — thorn, brier, bramble, and the spiked cactus-plant. This plain among the hills was called Shinar, "the low, black valley."

The people came pouring into it from all quarters, — through the gullies, along the water-courses, down the rugged sides. All paths led to this place, though the people did not know it, and it was a surprise to each party to discover other parties already there; for it seemed quite impossible that so many bands of men and women, who had been scattered about so widely, and had been separated so long, should ever find one another there. But here they came, and here they were at last, all of them; not one band was missing; not one man or woman was lost. Some came in earlier than others, but all came in. It was a dismal place to meet in, to be sure; very different from the lovely plain of their childhood. The huge mountains, the gray sky, the fruitless ground,

the sunless landscape, did not make a very cheerful prospect.

But here they were; and, once here, there was no way out; a barrier of stone shut them in; there they must dwell. And here they did dwell. Coming together, they soon perceived that they no longer were one family. They no longer felt alike, thought alike, believed alike, or prayed alike. Their souls were divided. It was only in outward appearance that they were united. They had the same faces, the same forms, the same speech, but the same loves and hopes they had not. What could they do?

Let us build a mighty tower, they said, that we may be able to look over these mountains, and reach the sky; in that way we may get up higher than the sunny plain we started from; and it will be all the better because we shall have built it ourselves; and shall climb into heaven by our own strength, like brave men as we are. We will dig deep into the earth for the foundations; we will draw long lines for the walls; we will bring together all the materials we have collected from all quarters in our wanderings; each shall put in

his force, his talent, his knowledge, his art, his science: and when it is finished it will stand as one grand work, composed of every kind of material, — a single building, made of stones of all shapes and sizes and colors; hard stones and soft stones; smooth stones and rough stones; round stones and square; the gray of granite, the white of marble, the crimson of porphyry, and the blue of the lapis-lazuli. There will be in it the strength of iron, the wealth of every species of precious wood, the sheen of silver, and the splendor of gold. We will have crystal windows, and doors of the costliest brass, whereon our artists shall cut, in noble figures, the history of our travels and the names of our princes. The pillars shall be chrysolites and sapphires; the floors shall be of fragrant sandalwood; the pavement of the courts shall be jasper; the peaks and minarets shall blaze with rubies and emeralds; on the top of the central pinnacle we will set a diamond that will lighten the whole valley like a sun. In this grand tower we will all live together, one family again. It shall be our home, our fortress, our palace, our temple, our house of art and pleasure, — our safe place,

where, if another flood should come, we may find refuge from the waters.

The idea seemed a good one; and to work on it they went. Their architects drew vast plans of the edifice; their engineers surveyed the ground, and marked out the limits of the walls; their laborers dug for clay, quarried for stone, hewed for wood; their miners went into the bowels of the earth for iron, lead, copper, silver, and gold; their divers sought jewels in the depths of the ocean; their explorers brought gems and crystals from the caverns where they were lying; their masons mixed lime for mortar, and made beds for the rocky foundation-stones; their carpenters shaped the timbers to their uses; their blacksmiths and whitesmiths set up their forges, and kindled the great fires; their carvers in metal, wood, and mineral prepared their most cunning and beautiful designs for decorating the ceilings and pillars; their spinners and weavers manufactured silk, satin, velvet, heavy damask, and brocade for drapery to cover wall and window; their artists mixed their most gorgeous colors, stretched their broadest canvas, and sketched the outline

of superb pictures; their sculptors chiselled in snowy marble the forms of animals and monsters, — fauns, satyrs, griffins, dragons. There was no science, no art, no talent, that was not called for, and each did its best. The plain was covered with materials for building, and swarmed with men at work. Mighty roads were made for the heavily laden wagons coming from far; strong bullocks tugged at the sledges carrying monstrous blocks of stone. A thousand hands strained at the ropes hoisting the beams of iron to their place.

Amid all this noise and confusion, the gigantic work went forward. Love of power, love of fame, pride of strength, intellect, will, knowledge,— ambition to reach the highest place, to baffle providence and cheat God, to get out of the reach of danger and death, all pushed the builders onward fiercely. The eye of their king, who was named Shatan, rested on them all the time; and no day passed that did not see the tower advanced. It was mounting up; it caught the rays of the setting sun over the ridges of the hills.

What is the matter now? What stops the work

that was going so grandly on? What has happened? The workmen make frantic gestures and strange signs to one another. Lips curl and twist and pout, but frame no word; mouths gape, tongues wag; but nothing comes that can be understood, — nothing but babbling, sputtering, gasping, wheezing, howling, braying, — frightful sounds like the utterance of beasts. Architects give orders which nobody comprehends. Master-builders thunder out directions which nobody heeds. A furious quarrel goes on between men who argue, scold, rave, but cannot make their meaning plain. The king stands by, glaring with rage; with frantic movements he seems to bid the laborers go on; with motions equally frantic they seem to say that to go on is out of the question. Masons call for brick and mortar, but their speech conveys no sense; carpenters call for hands, but their words are such as were never heard before. Of course the work is at a dead stand. Timbers cannot be fitted; stones cannot be laid; sand cannot be mixed with lime; the unmortised beams fall apart. The king clenches his hand, stamps his foot, gnashes his teeth; a terrible pale-

ness comes over his face, tremor shakes all his limbs; looking at him, people seem to see blazing swords waving above his head, in the hands of shadowy figures like angels. A sudden consternation seizes on all the builders of the tower. They hate each other as bitterest enemies, and seem, from loathing, about to tear each other in pieces. Here some brutal bricklayers are stoning to death the chief engineer; there some carvers are thrusting their fists in the artists' faces. The angel forms are seen more brightly; their swords glitter like lightning. The mighty walls crumble, and fall in hideous confusion, blackened as with a curse. They bury the king and his counsellors beneath their ruins, and pile up over them, as a ghastly monument, the tremendous architecture of their own pride.

The people, no longer one, but many,—of many feelings, many thoughts, many tongues,—fly apart as drops of water fly when a big stone drops into a shallow pool, with sounding splash, convulsing all the tiny lake. With angry looks and gestures of disgust, they speed in the most opposite directions, and, as fast as they can, go to the four cor-

ners of the earth. One party goes eastward, to the solitudes of the desert, and lives alone in the wide, waste spaces of sand. There, under the intense blue of the heavens, they gaze at night on the great glowing stars till they learn them all by heart, know their motions, and understand their habits, and build up the science of astronomy. They live always in the light, and worship the light. In the day the sun is so terrible in his glory that they are obliged to veil their faces. In the night the stars are so lustrous that they seem to be living in the sight of a myriad of burning eyes. To their own eyes, shut through the day by the terrible glare, and dazzled through the night by the fiery orbs that throw their trail of splendor over the wilderness, turn their minds inward for relief. They look into their own souls, and write in books about the wonderful things they find there.

While these hurry off to the East with their camels, another party takes the oxen and cattle, the sheep and goats, the wheeled carts, the tools for farming and building, and with steady face sets out for the West. Calm and sober and grave,

these travellers turned no look backward at the ruins of the Tower, but go sturdily on, as if the Land of Promise lay before them in some other country. The children ride on the backs of the cattle, play with the sportive lambs, or twine wreaths of flowers as they sit in their mother's lap. The boys and girls take care of the seeds they are to plant, or stand up trying to see what may be coming in the road before them. The men, with eager looks, are busy with their plans for a new life. The women, patient and sweet, sit still, their countenances beautiful with the love that is in their hearts. The old men, pale, gray-haired, withered, look as if they were putting their thin hands in the hand of the Lord. These are going to make gardens and build cities in the land that lay by the setting sun.

Northward goes a third troop, fiery, haughty, strong, full of life. They ride on horses. They have bows and arrows, lances and slings, helmets on their heads, breastplates on their bosoms, gloves of steel on their hands. Away from the scene of failure and devastation they dash at galloping speed, trampling down all that come in their path;

their blue eyes glittering like points of spears; their yellow hair streaming out behind them; their robes fluttering in the wind; their ruddy faces shining with the thought of the foes they shall subdue, the towns they shall conquer, the kings they shall overcome, the empires they shall found. These fierce warriors made the Northern lands ring with their battle-shouts, and, in the noise of their battling, soon drowned the din of the fallen Babel.

A very different party it is that goes to the South, — dark, ugly, short, crooked, savage. They do not look up, they do not look forward, they look sullenly down at the ground. The beasts that carry them are shaggy, fierce creatures, with lowering eyes, hanging ears, and slavering mouth. These people have no tools, no sheep, no vine-slips or seeds, no oxen or horses. Their countenances are not lighted up with hope or courage, but are sad with gloomy and ferocious fear. In the midst of the troop, a brutal-looking priest, with stumpy beard and hard face, hugs a wooden idol in his arms. The rest — a withered, toothless crone with skin of parchment and fingers with vulture's claws;

an old man, lean, swarthy, wiry; degraded young women and men that have the aspect of brutes in human form — gather round the priest and the idol to defend them from harm. These are going to the vast continent of Africa, to the place where now lives the king of Dahomey, — to the place of cruelty, bloodshed, slavery, cannibalism, and disgusting idolatries.

So these people, at first one people, pure, simple, loving, were broken up and scattered to the ends of the world, never to meet or mingle more; from this time to fear and hate each other, to pillage, rob, kill, and enslave each other; to pull down each the other's temples, burn each the other's homes, ravage each the other's fields, curse each the other's name. And all this happened because they tried to live together without love, and to get to heaven without truth.

They who break the bonds of love will be scattered, till they lose themselves, like dust or husks of wheat. They who try to reach heaven by knowledge, talent, skill, without faith, hope, and charity, will see their famous tower topple over, and will be fortunate to escape from the ruins.

But did no good come from the scattering of the people in the plain of Shinar? O yes. For one day they will meet again, and will build, not a tower of pride which the Lord will throw down, but a beautiful temple which he will dwell in.

THE ANGELS AND THE PATRIARCH.

ON the plain of Mamre, under the stiff, bright-green leaves of a terebinth-tree which was alive two hundred years ago, and which men two thousand years ago believed was as old as the world, sat the patriarch Abraham, at the door of his tent, in the heat of the noonday. He was a traveller from a far-off Northern country of wild crags, crystal springs, and dark cypress-trees. He left this fair land because he could not worship as the king and his people did. There is a very old story, which tells that, when Abraham was born, the

angel Gabriel received him, and wrapped him in a white robe. The same night Nimrod, the king, dreamed that the idol he worshiped fell down. The priests and sorcerers were called together; the dream was repeated to them, and a great fear came lest the old religion should pass away, and the stars, which are wonderfully beautiful in the East, should no longer be adored as they had been. An order went out that all the newly-born male children should be put to death. Abraham's mother, so runs the story, seized the babe and fled to a cave beyond the city. There, with Gabriel's help, she brought him up. Children, you know, like to suck their fingers, so the angel made water to flow from one of the infant's fingers, milk from another, honey from a third, from the fourth date-juice, and from the fifth butter. It was no wonder that the child grew plump on such rich food. On coming out of the dark cave, for the first time, — it was the early night, — the boy Abraham saw the evening star, so large and clear and lustrous that it threw a trail of splendor across the wide plain. Full of delight, he reached out his hands towards it, and cried, "This is my

God; this must be the beautiful being who fed me in the cave." Standing perfectly still, he watched it with his bright, black eyes, till it became dim, as if some greater light was coming. Soon it came, first a vast white glory, then the moon. The boy folded his hands, looked up with face of wonder, gazed with eyes fast filling with tears, and murmured, "How beautiful, how glorious, thou art! Thou art my God! Thou art the greatest! I worship thee!" The moon rose higher and higher; it made the valleys look like lakes of silver, and the mountains look like hills of snow; then it, too, became faint, and seemed to be losing itself in some vast ocean of light on the other side of the world. Presently the first golden streak of morning lay on the Eastern hills; violet and purple rays spread softly through the sky; mighty shafts of fire darted up into the air, into the very heart of the pale moon, which soon vanished away entirely; a splendor filled the eastern heavens, rolled up to the edge of the mountains, brimmed over, and poured into the valleys. Then uprose the sun; and, as he appeared, the whole earth gave him welcome. The birds broke out

into song; the trees waved their branches in the freshening breeze; the flowers put on their most brilliant colors, and opened their petals to his eye; the myriads of dew-drops changed, in a moment, to diamonds, and gemmed the bosom of the earth; insects fluttered their gauzy wings; bees began to hum; everywhere was life, beauty, joy. Abraham closed his dazzled eyes, and fell on his knees. "Thou, O Sun!" he cried, "art my God. Thee, and thee alone, I adore. Thou art the mightiest. Thou art the creator of the world." Having uttered his prayer, he rose from his knees, collected stones for an altar, and was about to offer sacrifice. The day wore on. The sun passing the point of noon, began to sink towards the west. The shadows fell. Grass, flowers, trees, faded till they could scarcely be seen; before Abraham's offering was ready, his deity had gone, and the great darkness was over everything. In the darkness he bowed him down, like a child, and hid his face, and worshiped the awful, mysterious Being who could put out all the lights, hush all the voices, wipe away all the colors, of creation, and again in a moment restore them.

Then Abraham took his wife and children, his flocks, his troops of camels and asses, his man-servants and maid-servants, and journeyed away from his home. Seven days he journeyed through a wild region, walking beneath the shadows of mountains, till he came to a lovely oasis, as beautiful as Eden itself. Here he pitched his tent, and would have stayed, for here, he surely thought, was the promised land. But the voice said to him, "On! on!" And on he pushed. After many days, the caravan, tired and faint, came to a grove of magnificent oaks, which spread their branches wide, and invited the travellers to their shelter. The camels were unloaded, the mules unpacked, the tents opened, the fires kindled; the smoke of the camp rose on the air. Here, at last, I may rest, said Abraham: this is the land of promise and of peace. But, again, the voice spake to him; again he must move. And now he is come to the plain of Mamre, to the vast grove of oaks or terebinth-trees, under one of which he is sitting.

Abraham is now an old man, but tall and strong. A scarlet cloak hangs from his shoulders, and

nearly touches the ground; a bright handkerchief is bound round his head by a fillet of rope; his bushy white beard lies heavily on his breast; his eyes flash with dark fires. The spear, which he usually carried in his hand, is driven into the ground by the side of his tent door. The tent is of black cloth, to give the deeper shade during the heat of noonday. His wife has her own tent near, where she bakes the cakes, and makes ready the meal of butter and milk. Stretched around are the long-necked camels, the asses, the flocks of sheep and goats. The slaves move about, at their work, among the piles of merchandise; children are asleep, or playing in the shade of the oaks.

As Abraham sits there, looking out over the valley, he sees three figures coming towards him, shadowless under the midday sun. Tall they are and solemn; they walk slowly, but not as if fatigued; their faces are white, but not with faintness. It was as if they came out of a furnace, for the ground under their feet was like heated metal, the air breathed hot, as if it blew from an oven, and the fierce sun beat on the sands like flame.

But they moved royally; and there was about them an air so much like that of kings, that Abraham bowed himself to the ground before them. As he offered them the shelter of his black tent, "Sirs," he said, "honor me with your presence till the heat of the day is over. Do not pass by unrefreshed; you have travelled far; you must be foot-sore and tired and hungry. Seat yourselves under the tree, and let me wash your feet with water from the spring, and bring a little bread to strengthen you before you go on." They seated themselves, silently, in the shade. Their host brought the water and bathed their feet till the delicious coolness crept over their whole body, and tingled in every vein. Then he ran to Sara's tent, crying, "Make haste! Bring three measures of white meal, knead it instantly, and bake cakes." The words were hardly out of his mouth, when he was away among the flocks, picking out the tenderest and fatest calf to be killed and dressed. One slave he ordered to get butter, another to bring milk; and, till the meal should be ready, he went back himself to the silent guests in the tent. Long they sat together in a stillness that was

more expressive than speech, — a stillness that sanctified the place, and awoke so many thoughts, that Abraham felt as if he was holding intercourse with spirits of another world. They ate and drank; their hearts were glad. The hours went sweetly by; the sun sank calmly in the west; the shadows lay long and cool on the ground; the fresh breeze from the hills fanned their faces. The strangers stood in the rosy light, their faces, in shadow, turned towards the east. Far away to the east, in the rich valley, lay two cities, just visible by the gleaming of their towers in the setting sun. Proud cities they were, full of wealth and luxury and sin. On these cities the three travellers gazed sadly and earnestly. Abraham, in awe, fell on his face before them, and asked a blessing. Something in his heart told him they were the Divine ones. They looked on him as he was bent to the ground; their countenances softened; their words fell on him graciously as the dew. "Thou hast received us well," they said; "we bless thee; thou shalt be the father of a great nation; and our blessing is the blessing of God. We go now to those cities yonder; and

in the morning, if you see a smoke rising from the valley, you may be sure it is the smoke of their destruction." Then Abraham fell on his face before them, and begged them, for happiness made him bold, to spare the cities. "There must be good men there," he said. "Will you burn their houses, destroy their goods, take their lives? O, think of the horror of it! think of the sorrow! think of the heart-breaking and the tears! think of the poor children crying! think of the mothers in their agony! It is a terrible thing to burn a city with so many beautiful homes. Why, if there were but fifty people there, who were pure and innocent, it would be better to spare the whole city than to hurt them; and there must be fifty."

"If there should be," said the angels, with a smile, "the city shall be spared."

"But suppose there be less than fifty," pleaded the noble patriarch; "suppose there be but forty-five; suppose there be but thirty, — twenty; nay, suppose there should be found there only ten, — think how much those ten are worth; ten good men! ten men who are just and faithful and true!

They might, in course of time, change the wicked and make them good. O, spare the city if you find ten good men in it!"

"We will," said the heavenly messengers, and their words, as they disappeared in the deepening shadows, floated like a benediction on the air.

The same evening Lot, the brother of Abraham, was sitting at the door of his house in Sodom, looking towards the west, when three figures entered the gate of the city, and passed along the street. Their forms were indistinct in the twilight; but their manner showed them to be strangers, and Lot rose, went forward to greet them, and begged them to spend the night in his house. They declined, saying that they would stay in the streets till morning, and would have passed on; but Lot pleaded with them so hard that they went in, and seated themselves. Hardly had the door closed on them, when murmurs rose in the street, — murmurs that grew louder till they swelled into shouts. The people came running together; a mob surrounded the house, uttering furious yells, making fierce gestures,

threatening to destroy the building and all in it if the strangers were not brought out and given up. "What would you do with them?" said Lot.

"Kill them, of course."

"But why kill them? Have they done you any wrong or harm? Are they murderers, thieves, peace-breakers?"

"No matter what they are; they are strangers, and that is reason enough for putting them to death."

"That is reason enough to defend them with all the strength I have," replied Lot. "They are strangers; who they are I know not; what they are I know not: they may be good men or bad men; they may be friends or foes: I have nothing to do with that. They are strangers; they are guests under my roof: I will not give them up."

The mob increased in numbers; the cries grew louder and more savage; the rabble clearly meant to beat in the door. The strangers begged Lot to let them go out and take care of themselves; but he would not yield. "No, no," he said; "you shall not stir; if they come in, they shall come over my body. Take my life if you want it," he

shouted to the rioters; "take the lives of my wife and children: here are my daughters, take them, and do with them what you will; but my guests you shall not have."

The danger was now becoming very great that the house would be torn down. The door was yielding to the blows, and could not resist much longer. At that moment, a strange, low sound was heard; the air became thick and hot; the ground trembled; forked lightnings gleamed and darted along the heavens; blue flames seemed, here and there, spouting up from the very pavement of the streets; the ground heaved and surged like the unsteady surface of the sea; birds that were flying over the city fluttered, gasped, and fell dead on the stones. The mob stood aghast: men with stones in their hands, which they were about to throw, let them fall; clubs were dropped; the attack on the building ceased; the people began to scatter, and soon the street was lonely as at midnight. Louder and louder sounded the thunder; redder and redder flashed the lightning; the pavement of the squares opened here and there in chasms; great cracks appeared in the

walls of the house; a thick vapor made it almost impossible to draw a breath; a smell like sulphur filled every room and closet. Lot then fell down on his knees; his wife, almost frantic, ran in and out, wringing her hands, and heaping reproaches on her husband for letting in the strangers who had brought such misfortune to the city. "Cast them out! cast them out!" cried the servants. "They are malefactors! They are blasphemers! They are impious! They are fleeing from the angels of Jehovah! Cast them out, or the city will be burned to ashes!"

But Lot still protected the strangers. "Touch them not," he cried. "Whoever they are, they are sacred here. You shall not harm a hair of their heads!"

Calm and serene, all the while, stood the strangers, and said not a word, till one of the servants, coming near, lifted his hand to strike. Before the blow fell, a change came over them. Their forms rose, tall and stately; their tattered robes fell from them; their faces shone with a wonderful light; circles of glory flashed around their heads; their golden hair was bright as rays of sunshine. Awe-

struck, the household fell at their feet; while in the silence came the murmur of multitudes rushing to and fro in terror, mingled with the crash of falling houses and the shrieks of dying men and women. "Rise and follow us," said the strangers at length. "The hour of doom has come. We must leave the place." The grand forms moved towards the door. Lot and his family followed them into the street, fearful, trembling, stunned by the noise, dazzled by the arrowy flames, nearly stifled by the smoke. Through the streets, which were still and clear as they passed along; through the gateway, which the guard had left; out into the fields, over the hills that overlooked the city, the heavenly messengers led their frightened friends.

Friends in the plural, alas! no more; for one by one the unbelieving servants fainted on the stones, fell through the yawning chasms of the earth, or were covered with the thick bitumen which filled the air. The patriarch's wife, weighed down by her terror and unbelief, hesitated, lingered, stopped, was overtaken by the pursuing destruction. When the dawn broke, Lot alone, with unfaltering step

and face set forward, trod in the track of the divine ones, till they vanished in the morning splendor. Then he turned, — to find himself alone, and to see a lake of pitch where the rich city had been.

When I had finished telling this story to my little company of children, one of them spoke up and said, "Were those three strange men angels?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Had they wings?"

"No."

"Then, how do you know they were angels?"

"Because they brought a message from the Lord. An angel is one sent with a message from above."

"But what are messages from the Lord?"

"They are messages of love and peace."

"But is everybody who brings a message from the Lord an angel?"

"Yes."

"Suppose, then, that I should bring a message of love and peace to one of my schoolmates, should I be an angel?"

"Certainly you would be. We are all angels

when we go on errands of love or bring words of kindness. Mothers are often angels to their children; children are often angels to their fathers and mothers; good people are guardian angels to bad people; tender nurses are pitying angels to sick men in hospitals. Angels are about us, are coming to us, are speaking to us all the time, if we only thought of it."

"But I thought angels were spirits."

"So they are; and are not we spirits, too? Are not you and I spirits?"

"Yes; but angels are very beautiful spirits, are they not? They have shining faces, and sunny brows, and eyes of light, have they not?"

"Yes; and so have you when you do angels' work, — I mean, when you say kind words, and give sweet messages, and do gentle deeds; when you bless and comfort and forgive and help, you are beautiful, — your faces shine, your brows are sunny, your eyes fill with happy light, your head seems crowned with a glory. Though your features were plain and coarse, yet in doing angels' work they shall appear to others divinely beautiful. When Florence Nightingale went through

the hospitals, she looked like an angel; yet she was not a handsome woman."

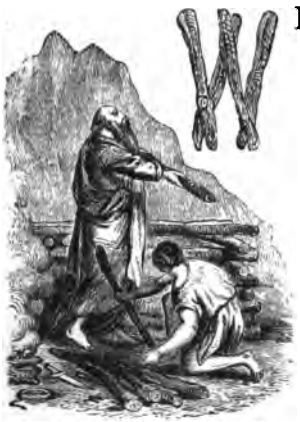
"Then angels live and walk about on the earth all the time?"

"Yes, all the time; and if you will treat people as kindly as Abraham and Lot did their visitors, you will see them and be blessed by them as they were."

"But how could the angels look so beautiful when they were burning up the city with so many men, women, and children?"

"They did not burn up the city. They only saved the good people from the fire."

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC



WHEN Abraham was at Beersheba, "The Well of the Seven," on the very edge of the desert, he had a dream. It seemed to him that a veiled and shadowy figure came to his bedside, and said: "Abraham, take thy son — thy only son Isaac, thy darling — and slay him, and burn him on the altar as a sacrifice to the Lord." The figure disappeared, but the hideous vision ceased not: the patriarch saw himself, with his boy, on the top of a high mountain, piling wood on an altar; then he saw himself standing over his son, who lay on the altar, and

putting a knife to his throat. Abraham started from his couch of skins trembling, his face convulsed, his forehead beaded with great drops of sweat, his heart beating so loud that one could hear it all over the tent. "Ah!" he cried at last, when he was broad awake, "it was only a dream; and the dream, I am sure, came from the Evil One, not from the Lord. The Lord never could have asked me to do such a thing as that. It is the Evil One who tempts me to an act of sin, not the Lord who calls me to an act of worship. He hates me, because I am the Lord's servant, and always do the Lord's will, and he wants to make me do something so horrible that it will bring on me the Lord's anger. The Evil One is jealous, too, of my beautiful boy, who is growing up so handsome and strong and good, and who will, one of these days, be such a powerful enemy of him and his. Yes, no doubt, he would like nothing better than to have him out of the way; and as he cannot destroy him by his wicked arts, he wishes to make me destroy him through my piety. But I am on the watch! I know him, the Wicked Spirit! He shall miss his object this time."

The day passed as usual. Abraham forgot his fright in the duties and anxieties it brought with it, and by evening his mind was calm. He lay down in his tent to sleep, after saying his evening prayer. Again, at dead of night, came the dreadful dream. Again the veiled figure drew near him, and said the same words. Again the same terrible vision of the mountain altar and the bound boy passed vividly before his eyes. In the early gray of the dawn, when all his people were asleep, the old man staggered to his feet, rushed from his tent, bathed his aching head in the cold spring water, drank deep draughts of the morning air, and tried to bring the peace of the hour into his troubled spirit. This time it was in vain. There was a sickness at his heart which the sweetest morning that ever dawned on the earth could not cure. There was a darkness on his soul which all the sunrises that ever broke over the hills could not brighten. For now he began to suspect that the dream came, not from the Evil One, but from the Lord. "But how can that be?" he cried in his anguish. "Why should the Lord bid me kill my darling boy? Did he not give me the boy in

my old age? Did he not make him the beautiful, the noble, the wonderful child he is, — the child of lovely and glorious promise, for whom the whole earth is waiting? Why should he wish him dead? What good would his dying do to him, to me, to anybody? It would bring my gray hairs to the dark grave. It would cut off the hope of so many fine children yet to be born. It would fill the hearts of the whole people with sorrow. Can it please the Lord that we should suffer so much misery? Does he delight in our tears? Is he happier when we break our hearts? No, no; I cannot believe it. There is some dreadful mistake about this. It was a nightmare. I must be crazy to fancy anything so terrible. But what if it should be the Lord? Then must I do what he bids me? Is there no escape from obedience? Surely my faithfulness has been often enough put to the proof. My loyalty to his will cannot be staked on this! But I will not trouble myself with such questions. It cannot be, it cannot be! I will not believe it. He cannot wish to prove my patience, and what else can he wish?"

The hours pass by. Abraham returned not to

his tent. Still he sat alone, on a great stone, on the edge of the wilderness. His wife came and spoke to him: he did not answer. She brought him the food he liked best: he would not eat. The fierce sun beat upon him: he did not seem to feel it at noonday. His little Isaac drew near to fondle him, but was frightened by the dark, sad face, and went away to his mother with eyes questioning and full of fear.

The third night came. Abraham went back to his hateful tent, in the darkness, fell on his face and prayed. This prayer gave him quiet. He laid himself down to sleep. Once more the veiled figure appeared, and said, "Abraham, take thy only son Isaac, thy darling, go with him towards the north, till thou comest to the mountain I will show thee. On the top of the mountain build an altar of stones, and on the altar sacrifice Isaac as a burnt-offering to the Lord." He saw the mountain in his dream, — the same place: he knew it; he had often been there to worship: he saw the altar, the knife, the human victim. The dream had come three times, and Abraham, by that sign, felt sure it was from God.

So he bowed his face to the ground and prayed and struggled with his soul. When he rose to his feet his mind was calm. He said to himself: "Well, if the Lord wishes it, it shall be done. If he wishes to try my faith in his goodness, he shall find that my faith is perfect. If he wishes to try my obedience to his will, he shall find that my obedience is complete. If he wishes to try my patience, he shall find that my patience is entire. His will shall be done. I am sure he loves me. I am sure he would not harm me. I am sure he would not bid me do anything wrong, though he may bid me do many things painful. He has always been my friend; he is my friend now, as much as ever. The word he has given me he will keep; the promise he has made he will be true to. I trust him. Isaac belongs to him more than to me; if it is his desire to take him away from me, I will not refuse him. He does not need the boy here, and he can teach me not to need him. Poor, dear little Isaac! my only one! My heart bleeds for thee. But how often it has bled when I thought of the hard life thou must lead in the wild deserts, and among the wild people,

if thou ever camest to be a man; how thou must be hungry and thirsty and cold; what battles thou must fight with enemies; what weary journeys thou must make over mountains and sand; how many times thou must pitch and strike again thy poor tent. My life has been hard and stormy! I would not live it over again. I am beginning to be tired now, and want to rest. For thee there will be no battle, no hardship, no fatigue, no sorrow or bitterness like this, my darling son. One quick stroke and all will be over. And, O my dearest! I shall not live long after thee, for my heart will break, and my spirit will go out of my broken bosom to find you, wherever thou mayst be."

It was a long struggle in the father's breast, but it ended. Pale, but strong, he rose now, and went out to prepare for the duty before him. Isaac was playing among the camels when he heard his father's voice calling. He left his play at once, happy that his father would speak to him again, after the long, silent gloom of the day before. "Yes, father," he cried, and came bounding with bright face to the tent where his father stood.

"Isaac, my son," said his father, "I must go northward, a short journey, and I want you to go with me. You and I will go alone. Have two asses make ready, with food for seven days."

The lad was delighted. To go on a journey with his father was a great treat, — to go alone with him was a pleasure he had never had in his life till that morning. He ran off full of glee; made the slaves take out the donkeys, led them to water himself, skipped to his mother's tent to tell her what a glorious time he was to have, stood by the fire while the cakes were baking, saw the slices of veal nicely cut and laid together, filled the leathern bottles with fresh water at the spring, had his father's great wood-knife sharpened for cutting fagots, if necessary, to make fires. All day long he was busy as ever little boy was, — and little boys are very busy when they are busy at all. They will work hard enough for fun.

In the afternoon all was ready to set off, and the people of the camp gathered together in a crowd to see the departure. Abraham was grave, but tried to look as cheerful as he could. Isaac was overflowing with frolic. Sarah came out to

say, "Good-by," and stood for a long time watching them, her hand shading her face from the rays of the setting sun, till the travellers became little specks in the distance, and at last vanished out of sight entirely. When she could see them no longer, she turned back, and wiped a big tear from her eye. She could not tell how it came there; but somehow her heart was sad, as if some evil thing was going to happen; and when she was alone in her tent, she sat down and cried as if she were a little child.

The father and son went on and on, — one day, two days, three days. At night they lay down, side by side, under the stars, and slept. In the early morning, they prayed, ate their simple meal of butter and cakes, and went on their way again. At noon, when the sun was hot, they rested themselves under a tree, or in the shadow of a great rock, if there was no tree near; unloaded the donkeys, opened the baskets, and ate their noontide meal. In the cool of the day they once more resumed their march. For the first day or two the boy enjoyed every mile of the road; he ran at full speed over the sands, he climbed among the

Esau went raging from the tent of his father, and would have killed Jacob if he had met him; but his mother kept him hidden, and at the first chance sent him away to another part of the country, out of his brother's reach. He went in haste, alone, to find the home of his uncle Laban. He had no tent, and was obliged to pass the night in the open air, under the stars. The first night the sun went down on him as he was among the mountains; all around him, far and near, was wilderness; the ground was covered with great sheets of rock, that shimmered in the moon; and every here and there a crag, pointed and ragged, stood up, looking in the dim light like a spectral staircase mounting up to the clouds. Not a tree was to be seen, not a bush, not a green thing of any kind: nothing but stones. He must lie down on the stones and sleep as well as he might, and a stone must be his pillow. The tired man was soon asleep; not so soundly asleep, though, that he did not dream towards the morning. The loneliness, the strangeness, the wildness, the big stones heaped one on top of another; the huge pinnacles of rock towering up above his head,

white in the moonbeams; the remembrance of his father's blessing and promise; the scene in the tent when the venerable hands came down on his bent head; the last words his father spoke, "God almighty bless thee, and multiply thee, and give thee the blessing of Abraham, that thou mayest inherit the land which he gave to him,"—all mixed themselves together in his dream, and made a wonderful vision. It seemed to him that a ladder reached all the way from the stones he lay on to the stars. At the top of the ladder stood the Lord, the very image of his venerable father, smiling on him; and over the rounds, angels went up and down, bearing messages of love. What they seemed to say was the same his father had said in the morning, "Thy children shall be as the dust of the earth; and in thee and them all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Jacob woke from his dream, and felt as if he had been in heaven. The stars looked down on him like sweet and holy eyes; the silence was so full of mystery and fear, that he hardly dared to breathe lest he should break it; the night-breeze whispering among the stones sounded like the

voices of spirits. He started up; it was morning twilight, the gray dawn was just breaking on the hills. The first thing he did was to take the stone he had used for a pillow, and set it up as a holy stone to mark the spot where he had lain. The spot he called Bethel, or "House of God," and the famous city of Bethel was afterwards built on that very place.

Now, after all this, one would think that Jacob might, for an hour or so, have forgotten his cunning disposition to trade and make bargains; but he did not. The love of money-making is very hard to overcome. No sooner had he set up the stone, and said, this shall be a sacred place, than he thought it a good time to make a little bargain with God, seeing that God seemed so fond of him. He therefore offered a prayer, after this fashion, — a very singular prayer, which none but a born Jew would make, — he said, "O God, if thou wilt be with me, and wilt be my friend in the way I am going, and wilt give me enough to eat and drink, and plenty of clothes to wear, and wilt bring me home one of these days to my father's house, I will choose you for my God, and will give you a tenth part of all you give me."

Don't you think that was very generous in Jacob? And don't you think the Lord should have felt very much complimented by so much piety and devotion? Jacob, you see, watched his chance. He had bought his brother's fortune for a plate of soup, and now he thought he could buy the Lord's blessing, and ever so many good things beside, at as reasonable rate! It was very foolish in him to think so; but he was not the first man who thought so, nor the last.

After prayers, Jacob went on his way, watching to see whether the Lord would be true to his side of the bargain. He did not trust entirely to the Lord, however, but kept his wits well about him, determined to lose no good opportunity of making his fortune. I cannot tell you all he did, or all that happened to him. That would be a long story; for he was absent from home twenty years. In that time he married two of his cousins, and had a great many children. He and his uncle Laban grew very rich in cattle and flocks; and as Jacob's family increased, he proposed to take his own portion, whatever it might be, and go back to his old home.

"What portion will you take for your share?" said Laban to Jacob.

"I will take," answered Jacob, appearing to be exceedingly modest, "I will take all the speckled and spotted cattle, all the brown sheep, and all the spotted and speckled goats; then we shall know yours from mine, and there can be no mistake." Now Jacob knew a trick by which he could make cattle and sheep bring forth speckled and spotted offspring. He tried this trick, and in a short time his part of the flocks was much larger than his uncle's. He had all the large and strong and fat ones; his uncle had all the puny and lean and weak ones. And Jacob said to his wife, "See how the Lord loves me! He has taken the best part of your father's sheep and oxen and given them to me." The sons of Laban did not see the matter in the same light, and bore Jacob no good will for his little piece of knavery. Laban himself suspected that something was wrong, and was angry with his nephew. Jacob perceived it, and said to his wives, "Behold, your father and brothers are angry with me because the Lord is my friend; and now the Lord tells me to go back to

my old home. An angel appeared, and spake to me in a dream, saying, 'Arise, get thee out of this land, and return to the land of thy kindred.'" Rachel, his wife, welcomed the idea with all her heart. She packed up all the things which belonged to her, — her father accused her of taking with her some things that did not belong to her, — and they started without saying a word to Laban. They had been gone three days before he knew anything about it. He instantly gave chase, and easily caught up with the fugitives, — who, being a large body, moved slowly. There was a little quarrel, a good deal of search after stolen goods, but Jacob had the best of it, and the old man went back, leaving his son-in-law to pursue his journey.

It was twenty years, you remember, since Jacob left his father's home. He went away alone; he returned with a great company. As he drew near the territory of his brother Esau, he sent messengers of friendship and peace. Esau sent back word that he would meet his brother with four hundred men! Four hundred men! that must mean enmity! That must mean war! Esau

remembered the old wrong, and was going to avenge it! Poor Jacob was sorely frightened, as well he might be. However, he would do what he could to save himself. He could not fight his brother; but, perhaps, he could buy him off with presents. He took from his flock two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty she-asses and ten foals. A very handsome gift. These he divided into several droves, and bade the drovers go on one after the other, leaving some distance between, so that they should meet Esau one at a time. When he asked to whom they belonged, they were to say, "To you, my lord; a present from your brother Jacob." Having sent the drovers forward, he arranged the rest of his family in troops, and sent them on. First went the servants, with their children, the part of his establishment that he valued least, and that he was most willing to lose. A noble man would have placed these defenceless ones behind, and protected them with his own life. But Jacob was too careful of his body to do that.

Next to the maid-servants and their children, came — who do you think? Jacob? No; the oldest of his two wives, with her children, to take the next chance of being cut to pieces. After these, who were sent forward? Surely Jacob went then? No; Rachel with her children, — the best beloved, to take the next chance of death. Jacob stayed behind, alone, — putting the little river Jabbok between himself and Esau, and all whom he had sent before to meet him.

No wonder the man saw ghosts that night! No wonder he trembled with fear! No wonder, when he was all solitary in the dark, the terrible Esau, whom he had cheated and robbed of the dearest things on earth, sweeping down on him with four hundred armed men, — his wives and children and maid-servants exposed to their fury, — he himself in danger of losing his cowardly life. No wonder he felt scared, and in his terror found out that he had a conscience. All that night was spent in a fearful struggle with that hitherto unconscious spirit. It seemed as if a huge, black being, mysterious, shadowy, awful, came upon him in the midnight like a storm, and tried to kill him.

Hour after hour the two grappled fiercely in the solitude. In the pauses of the wrestle, as they stopped to take breath, Jacob cried, "Who art thou? Who art thou? Tell me thy name?" No answer was given to his cry; and at it they went once more. Fear, shame, remorse, all the dark spectres came upon the poor man, till he was all but broken down. As the day began to break, the dark presence, as if tired by the long battle with so obstinate a foe, tried to loose himself, and get away; but Jacob would not let it go. "No, no. Thou shalt bless me first. I will not let thee go until thou bless me." And as the morning light became strong, the blessing came. Jacob conquered his adversary; not without bruises and harm, for in the struggle he was lamed for life.

The patriarch got the better of his conscience; for it was his conscience he fought with. Would it not have been better, my dear children, if his conscience had got the better of him?

But if he got the better of his conscience, when his conscience should have got the better of him, how happened it that the blessing came? Is it a

blessing to gain a victory over one's conscience? Is it not a blessing to have one's conscience gain a victory over him? "It seems to me," said a little girl, "that Jacob had done nothing to deserve a blessing. Men are blest when they have been good; but he had not been good. He had been dishonest, for he had cheated his father, his brother, and his uncle. He had been selfish; for he would not worship God, except for pay, and tried to bribe the Lord with prayers to give him the good things he wanted. He had been hypocritical; for he pretended that God made him rich when he made himself rich by his own knavery. He was a coward; for he was afraid to meet his noble brother face to face. He was worse than a coward; for he exposed his women and children to his brother's fury, in order to escape before the danger came near himself. It is hard to say what mean and miserable thing this Jacob was not. And now, when there is a chance for him to repent, when his conscience comes upon him at midnight like a strong man, he fights with it till he beats it down. Yet he has a blessing! It must have been a strange kind of blessing! Don't

you think he pretended it was a blessing, when it was something else?"

Well, my children, this does seem hard to understand. But I think we shall understand it if we bear in mind what sort of things Jacob counted as blessings. You know how he bargained in his prayer that if God would give him plenty to eat and drink, and clothes to wear, and safety, and a return home, he would choose him for his God. These, then, were the blessings that Jacob looked for. People who conquer their consciences often get such blessings as those; and people sometimes are obliged to conquer their consciences to get them.

"And did the two brothers meet?"

"Yes."

"Did they fight?"

"No."

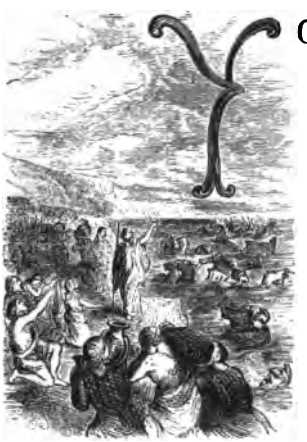
"What did Jacob do when he saw his brother Esau?"

"Just what one might expect. He fell down on the ground before him, and crawled towards him on his hands and knees, striking his forehead seven times on the earth, calling him, "My lord," as if he were a slave."

"What did Esau do?"

"Noble fellow! He lifted him up, kissed him, hugged him, cried over him, was glad that he was so rich and prosperous, refused to take any of his presents, and offered him some of his body guard to protect him from the robbers of the mountains."

THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA.



YOU have all read, many times, the beautiful story of Joseph in the old Bible. He was the darling son of this Jacob I have been telling you of. His brothers, you remember, hated him, and wished he was out of the way, — just as their father had hated his brother Esau, and wished he was out of the way. One day they sold him as a slave to some traders who were going down to Egypt. There he became a very high and important person near the king. Some years after this, a great famine visited the land where Jacob and his sons were

living, and some of them went to Egypt to buy food. There they met with Joseph, who had altered so much that they did not know him, though he knew them. The end of it was, that the whole family went to Egypt to live. In course of time they became a great family, very rich and very powerful. Some think they made themselves masters of the country and ruled it; their chiefs becoming Pharaohs themselves, and building many of the splendid monuments which so excite the wonder of travellers. But however this may have been, their rule after a time came to an end. A more powerful king attacked them, gained possession of the throne, and the Israelites were once more subjects of a monarch who hated them, oppressed them, and did all in his power to crush them. They were reduced to the condition of slaves, the most miserable condition on the face of the earth. The lowest, meanest, and hardest work they were compelled to do without pay. They were no better than beasts of burden. In Egypt, as in all Eastern lands, the lives of the working people were held to be good for nothing. One old traveller says, that it took two thousand

men three years to carry a single stone from Elephanta to Sais for a temple. Another historian tells us that three hundred and sixty thousand men were employed for twenty years in building one of the great pyramids which now stands in the desert. Of course the waste of human life was frightful. A single canal is said to have cost the lives of one hundred and twenty thousand men. It is very likely that the Hebrews were set to work on some of those gigantic monuments of power, and that they fell down and died like so many poor worn-out horses and mules. The Egyptians used a vast deal of brick in their buildings. The high, thick walls that ran for miles all round their great cities, with towers, forts, and battlements; the walls that enclosed their temples, many of their huge palaces, most of their smaller towns, and some of their funeral monuments, were made of brick. Pictures that have been found in the ancient tombs represent people, looking very much as the Hebrews must have looked, at work in the manufacture of these large, hard bricks. The Bible says they had to make them sometimes without straw enough to hold them together, —

which is very much like saying, that they had to make them when they could not make them, and when they could not, were beaten.

Great numbers of these poor slaves toiled under the eye of overseers in the low, damp, steaming fields where grew the enormous crops of grain which made the valley of the river Nile the garden of the world. This field-work was very hard. In some places, canals must be dug to carry the water that overflowed the river-banks to the farms that lay at a distance from the stream. In other places, where the river did not overflow its banks, because they were too high, the water must be drawn up in buckets to fill the canals. This was the hardest work of all. The laborers, all but naked, stood in the very eye of the blazing sun, all day long, without moving from their places, just like machines, letting down and pulling up these heavy buckets. Their sufferings were dreadful; for if they stopped in their task, they were punished most cruelly, by the bastinado, on the soles of their feet. The women were driven to work just as the slave-women are on the Southern cotton and rice fields; the boys and girls, too,

rocks, he chased the shining lizards, and threw stones at the quick foxes; and when he was tired, walked by his father's side or rode on the back of the ass. The third day he became quiet, for his father was silent, and so sad that the boy did not venture to laugh and talk with him any more.

It was now the morning of the fourth day. They rose, and before them was a mountain, its top just brightening in the beauty of the dawn. "We go to the top of the mountain," said Abraham to his son. "That is the end of our journey."

It was not far to the top, and the lad enjoyed the climb hugely in the fresh morning breeze. "But, father!" he exclaimed, "what have we come here for? What can you have to do in this lonely place?"

"I have come to worship," said the father; "and the first thing to do is to build an altar of stones. So come, my boy, let us be about it at once."

The boy needed no second order. He picked up the stones faster than his father could pile them; he brought bundles of fagots and large sticks for the fire, — always choosing the driest,

that would kindle quickly and make a bright blaze. It was evening when the work was done. Tired by his labors, the lad lay down and slept soundly, and did not see how his father walked about all night in the damp air, nor hear how he groaned and prayed as if his heart was breaking.

When the boy woke, the sun was high. He looked up, and saw two great eyes fixed on him, — eyes that looked as if they had been full once of red fire, which was now extinguished by floods of tears, that fell, one by one, on the lad, like the big drops that come before a thunder-shower. Isaac stretched out his hands, clung to his father's neck, and said, with wonder: "Why, father dear, what is the matter? Has anything dreadful happened? Are the sticks all wet, so that they will not burn? Or has the wind, in the night, thrown down the stones we worked so hard to pile up?"

"No, my son. The altar is well built, and the wood is ready for kindling."

"What then? Father dear, can you find no lamb or kid for an offering? Why did you not bring one of our fine fat sheep, father? We had

some beauties, and it would not have been much trouble to bring one with us."

"My darling, we brought our sacrifice with us from the camp, and it is here."

"Why, father, what can it be? Not one of the donkeys? You never offer donkeys to the Lord. But what else can it be? We brought no other creature."

"Isaac, my son, my darling, the victim is yourself. I came here to offer you to the Lord." Then Abraham told his son the terrible dream, and how it was repeated three times, and how there was no escape from the command, — that he must die. It was the Lord's will, and must be obeyed. If it was not obeyed, he and his wife Sara, and all the people in the camp, might suffer dreadful evils. What the Lord desired it for, he could not tell. "But, Isaac, you know as well as I, that the Lord never could bid us do anything that would not be best for us in the end. So, my dear child, you will submit. The pain will be short. Mine will be much sharper and longer. I wish I could die for you, my darling; for how can I live when you are gone? How can I

go home without you? How can I meet your mother? How can I offer her my hand, stained with your blood? I wish I could die with you!"

When Abraham first spoke, the face of Isaac turned pale as ashes, and he began to plead for his life; but, on seeing his father's anguish, the brave boy recovered himself, dried his tears, and said: "My father, if it is the will of God that I should die, I will die. It is sweeter to die by your hand, father, than in another way. It is sweeter to die as a holy sacrifice, than to die by sickness or accident. Do the Lord's will, father. Life is very dear to me. I love you and mother, and the servants, and all the camels and sheep. I love the grass and the hills and the fountains. I believe I love everything in the world. If I could only kiss mother once more before I die! But then she would know I was going to die, and that would make her sorry. Don't be afraid, father; I will be still; I will not cry or struggle. But, father, you will make your knife very sharp, and you will do it very quick, — as quick as you can, won't you? And take off your dress, that mother may not see any drops of my blood on it. Now,

father dear, put your arms round me, and kiss me, and I am ready."

Then they prayed together; and Abraham stripped the boy, and tied a bandage round his eyes, so that they should not see the knife, and so that he should not see their pleading looks. White and pure and innocent he lies now on the altar, bound hand and foot, waiting for the stroke. The father does his work quickly; gives himself no time to think, and gives the boy no time to fear. The knife glitters in the air, — it is about to gash the tender throat; but, suddenly, the lifted arm seems to be seized as by the hand of an angel. The blow will not fall. For a second or two there is a terrible suspense, — then down comes the knife, not to wound the child, but to cut the cords that tied the hands and feet; the bandage about the eyes is torn off. The boy, half dead, is caught up fainting, and pressed to his father's bosom, till he is almost smothered by caresses. The soul has so nearly gone out of the little tender body, that it can hardly be brought back again. The father puts wine to his lips, bathes his face with water, rubs his limbs, calls him by the sweetest names.

At length the great wondering eyes open and gaze about, but they see nothing; he sighs, he moves, he speaks, he smiles. A violent shudder comes over him as he sees the altar; he hides his face in his father's bosom, to escape the sight; he looks into his father's face, and it is so bright with happiness that he fancies himself in heaven. So he was, — in a heaven of gratitude and joy and love, and that is the best heaven one can be in.

God did not want the sacrifice. He only wanted — the heart that could make it.

JACOB AND HIS MIDNIGHT FOE.

SO Isaac grew up to be a rich and powerful man. His flocks of sheep covered all the hillsides; his herds of oxen and cows browsed over the pastures for miles around; he was like a great prince with his army of slaves and laborers about him. The kings of the country where he pitched his tents and settled were afraid of him, and begged him to go farther off; and he moved from one place to another, and had no resting-place. He had two sons born at the same time, twins. Most twins look so much alike that one can hardly tell them

apart; and parents sometimes dress them in different colored clothes, that they may know which is which. But these two boys looked so unlike each other, that no one would suppose they were brothers at all, — much less twin brothers. One was ruddy, with wild, light eyes, fiery locks, and a body covered with thick yellow hair. This one came first into the world, and was named Esau, the hairy. His brother, who followed him immediately, and came into the world a minute or two later, was dark, with black hair, piercing eyes, and smooth, sleek skin. As the two brothers grew up, they shewed themselves as unlike in character as they were in appearance. Esau lived out of doors in the air, on the mountains. He was fond of hunting. A noble fellow, altogether, was Esau; brave, bold, adventurous, hearty. He was the friend of everybody, and believed that everybody was his friend. He was all frankness and generosity and kindness. He did not care to be rich or great or famous; he did not care to build cities or own lands or rule men. To go out after the savage bears, to beat up the quarters of the tawny lions, to kill fat stags, and bring home the

choice venison to his father, was his great delight. The tents were carpeted with the bright skins of the beasts he slew, and were hung all about with the trophies that he took in the chase.

His brother Jacob was a smooth, quiet youth, who liked to stay at home in the safe tents. He was his mother's boy. He knew how many oxen there were, how many goats and sheep, how many acres of land in the farm, how much milk the cows made, and how many pounds of butter were churned in a week. He looked after the calves and kids, and had an eye to the money value of the skins which Esau brought home on his shoulders from the forests. He always knew when it was dinner-time, did Jacob; and sat close by his mother, to get the nice bits of lamb. The rough, blunt, honest Esau was not at all to the taste of this supple youth; he was always glad when he went off hunting, and sorry when he came home; had a secret wish sometimes, probably, that he would never come home, for then the birthright, the inheritance, and the family honors would be his own. For Esau, being the elder son, though only a minute or two the elder, was the heir of his

father's property and fame. This thought vexed Jacob so much, that he determined, if he could, to get the birthright away from his brother. And he did it in this manner. Esau usually came home from his hunting, late for dinner; and was obliged to eat such cold scraps as might be left in the cupboard; and these were sometimes little enough for a hungry man. Now and then it happened that he went supperless to bed, and on these occasions he was not in an amiable frame of mind. One day, when he was going on a very long tramp, and was likely to return later than common, the cunning Jacob, with the help of his mother, Rebecca, hit on the following little plan to make him swear away his inheritance. In the afternoon they cooked a delicious pottage of meat and vegetables, such as the hunter was particularly fond of, and had it smoking hot and savory against his coming in. He came late, ravenous with hunger, and so faint that he could hardly drag one foot after the other. The first thing that met him was the odor of the stew. Jacob was standing by the pot, stirring it with a long ladle. "Ah, the red, red pottage!" cried the starving youth. "Give me some quick, I am famished!"

"Stop a minute," said Jacob. "What will you give me for it?"

"Anything you want," was the answer.

"Will you give me your birthright?"

"Yes. What is my birthright? It will be good for nothing to me if I starve to death." And he was about to lay his hands on the vessel.

"Stop a minute," said Jacob. "I want to make sure of this; and you must swear to me solemnly, that you will give me your place as the eldest son, with all the privileges of the place, or you shall not have a mouthful." Then Esau petulantly took the oath, and ate his supper, and went to bed.

There is a very old story that Abraham died the same hour that Esau sold his birthright for soup; and the story is so beautiful that I will tell it here. He had reached the age of two hundred years, when God sent to him the Angel of Death, in the form of a decrepit old man. Abraham, always hospitable, asked him to sit down and eat; but the guest trembled so, that before he could put a morsel into his mouth, he besmeared his nose, eyes, and forehead with the food. "Why dost thou tremble so?" said Abraham.

"From age," replied the angel.

"How old art thou?"

"Just one year older than thyself."

"Abraham lifted up his eyes, and exclaimed, "O God, take my soul to thee before I fall into a state like that!"

"How wouldst thou like to die, O thou Friend of God?" inquired the Angel of Death.

"If I might have my wish," answered the Patriarch, "I would breathe out my life at the moment I fall down in prayer."

The messenger waited till the hour of evening worship. And when the old man's heart fluttered out of his bosom to his Creator, it found its way to the seats of blessedness, and never came back to the earth.

So Jacob cheated Esau of his birthright. But this was not enough. He must have also his father's blessing, which was necessary to make the birthright good, and which could be given only to the eldest son. To get this blessing from his father was a harder thing than to get the birthright from simple, honest Esau. However, he and his mother put their wits together, — or, rather,

his mother put her wits into him, and he took them, and with their help hit on the following little plan. Isaac was exceedingly fond of game soup, and he said one day to Esau, "My son, go to the forest and shoot a stag, that I may have some of the venison pottage I like so much." So Esau took his bow and arrows, and went out to the forest.

"Now," said Rebecca to Jacob, "is your chance. Go kill two of the fattest kids; cook them nicely, make a pottage of them, and carry it in to your father, before Esau comes back."

"But," said Jacob, "he will know the difference between the kid and venison."

"O no!" answered Rebecca, "if he thinks it is venison, it will taste like venison; his palate is not very delicate, now he is old. Don't be afraid, but go in boldly, and offer it to him."

"But," Jacob replied, "if he does not find out that the kid is not venison, he will find out that I am not Esau, and that will be just as fatal to our plan."

"Never fear that," his mother made answer, "he is almost blind, and the tent is dark. He can't see which of his sons it is."

"Yes," rejoined the sharp-witted youth, "but he may feel which it is. What if he should put his hand on me, and touch my smooth skin?"

"True," responded the mother, "that would not do at all. Let me see. Ah, I have it! You shall cover your hands and neck with the kid skin. Then, if he should feel of you, he will think he is feeling of Esau. That will do."

So the kids were killed, the soup was made, the skin was tied to Jacob's hands and neck, and in he went with the huge bowl of pottage. "Here I am, father!"

"What, my son, so soon returned! You have had a short chase to-day."

"Yes, father. I did not have to go far. The deer were plenty."

The old man ate the soup, and found it good; it gladdened his heart; and, in the overflowing of his affection, he stretched out his hands to bless his son. "Where art thou, my son? Come near, that I may put my hand on thy head, and bless thee." Jacob came near, and bent his head, so that his father could not feel his face. "Are you indeed Esau?" said the old man, "I thought your voice sounded like the voice of Jacob."

"It is I, in truth, my father," replied the cunning youth, mimicking as well as he could his brother's voice.

"Let me touch you, that I may be sure." And the trembling hands reached out towards the bending form. Jacob saw them coming, put his hairy hands in their way, and then laid them on his kid-skin neck. "Yes, it is thou, my son; kiss me." Then the old Isaac placed his hands on Jacob's head, and blessed him, saying, "May God give thee of heaven's dew, the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. May people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be every one that blesseth thee."

No sooner had Jacob gone from his father's presence, than Esau, hot from the hunt, came in. "Here, father, here is your son Esau, with the venison; it is rich, and will strengthen your heart."

"What! Esau!" said the old man with amazement. "Esau! He just went from here."

"No, father. I am this moment returned from the hunt."

"It must have been Jacob, then; for surely one came with pottage, and asked my blessing, and I gave it. Gave him your blessing."

"O, my father! Take it back, and give it to me. He is a cheat! Twice has he stolen from me; once he stole my birthright, and the second time he has stolen my blessing. Take away the blessing from him."

"I cannot," said Isaac. "It was given by mistake; but it was given; and cannot be taken back. I have made him the lord, and have given him all his brothers as servants. The corn and wine are his. What is there left for thee, my son?"

"O something, there must be something!" cried the miserable young man. "Have you only one blessing? Do bless me, dear father."

But Isaac could only say, "The earth is large enough for both of you. You too shall have the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the ground. But you must live by the sword, and be your brother's servant till you are strong enough to throw his yoke from your neck. I can promise you no more."

toiled wearily under the lash. The cry of these wretched people went up, day and night, for deliverance from this dreadful bondage. Along the banks of the holy river sighed the melancholy music of their songs, like the heart-breaking negro melodies we have heard so often.

How these miserable folks lived, what sort of houses they had, what kind of food, what beds to sleep on, we do not know. Nobody has thought it worth his while to tell us. Probably they were huddled together in close, filthy cabins in the dirtiest and darkest part of the cities, ate what nobody else would eat, and threw themselves down at night on the bare ground. Still, with all this poverty and want and filth and sadness and despair, the number of them grew so fast that the king racked his brains for some way to keep them down. He gave them harder work, and worse food; he made their lives bitter in every possible way. When he found that they still increased, he bade the nurses kill every boy-baby when it was born, that he might not grow up and become a man. Of course the nurses would not do anything so unnatural as that. Then he commanded

that all the boy-babies that were born should be thrown by his officers into the river; and this, if we may believe the story, was done. Still the people grew in number and multiplied to the terror of the land. What was worse than the increase of numbers, was the increase of poverty and squalor and wretchedness. For now all the dirt and toil and starvation and sorrow produced, as they always do, dreadful distempers; frightful diseases spread among the Israelites; their skin became glazed and swollen; ulcers, blotches, and sores came out over the surface of their bodies; the feet and hands swelled, the nails fell off, the hair dropped, and the head was covered with horrid scabs. Sometimes they became entirely white from top to toe; they were covered with scales; they lost the use of their senses. This was leprosy, — one of the most shocking diseases that ever afflicted mankind. The slaves gave it to their overseers; the overseers gave it to the common people; the people gave it to the higher classes: it spread, by degrees, among the rich and elegant; it reached the ladies and gentlemen, the nobles, so dainty and nice, the priests in their white robes.

It brought down the beautiful women and tall men; the loveliest girls became objects of loathing to their lovers, and people who were members of the same family shrunk from each other as if they were accursed. A cry went up from the whole nation that the vile slaves should be sent out of the country. But the king paid no attention to it; he wished to keep the slaves; and thought the leprosy would only last a little while. But it lasted a great while, and worse things than leprosy, if worse things could be, came from the misery and squalor in which the slaves were kept.

The sacred river, the mighty Nile, so the old history relates, the one solitary stream of the land, which had its rise in mountains that had never been found, and rolled a great flood through the country every year, — the river they all drank of and bathed in, whose soft, delicious water filled the tanks and cisterns of their houses, stood in cool stone jars in their chambers, played in fountains in their gardens and squares, — this holy river was poisoned; poisoned, probably, by the filth they threw into it; poisoned by the dead bodies of the little babies that were drowned in

it; its tide became red and slimy, as if stained with blood, so that the people could not drink of it, but lay about sick and panting with terrible thirst. There was no water except that which was already in the full cisterns, and that could not last long; it was, besides, too precious to be used in large quantities. This added to the sickness and the misery. To increase the horror of it, the creatures that lived in the Nile left the poisoned stream, crawled up on the banks, and swarmed over the land. The green, slimy things were everywhere, — in the cellars, on the pavement, on the parlor floors, on the marble tiles of halls and galleries, on chairs and tables, in closets and beds. Great heaps of frogs lay rotting in the streets, the villages, the fields, sickening the air with the stench of their putrefaction, and making more sore and deadly the shocking maladies that existed before.

Each evil bred another evil; each woe was the parent of another woe. The cattle sickened and died, in vast numbers, from the bad water and the bad air. They staggered and fell, and lay out in the hot sun, throwing the hideous stench of their

decay all abroad. The great white skeletons bleached in the open fields; the heavy old carcasses blackened in the pen and stall. Oxen fainted at the plough; cows gave no milk. Oh the misery of the time was dreadful! the people could not bear it; they began to think it was a judgment on them for treating their slaves as they had done. They implored Pharaoh to release the Israelites, to let them go, to drive them off if they would not go willingly, — to be rid of them at any rate. But Pharaoh said, O no; we shall be sorry if we do; wait a little while, and all this will come to an end.

But it did not come to an end, quite the contrary; new horrors came to a beginning. All this rot of carcasses in the open air, this putrefaction of fish that died in the river and were flung out on the shore, — this vile scum and abominable nastiness, and putrid fetor arising from public places, even from holy places, where the sacred goats, rams, calves, crocodiles, were mouldering away, were terrible breeders of vermin. Swarms of flies filled and clouded the air, — the dismal, disgusting flies that feed on carrion, — immense,

hairy, fierce, with horrible goggle eyes, long stings whose bite was poisonous, and thick wings whose fluttering made a dolorous hum as they flew from corpse to corpse. Bugs of all sorts appeared,—fleas, lice, every kind of loathsome thing that infests the skin, the clothing, the hair; so that every minute of existence was made miserable. The Egyptians were the cleanest people on the earth. A mosquito all but drove them crazy; and here were things which made mosquitoes sink to nothing.

All this, one would think, might have made Pharaoh open his eyes to the duty of sending away the slaves, who were the cause of so much torture to his people. But he said to himself: "No; the worst has happened now that can happen, and this cannot last long. If I let the slaves go, who will work in my fields? who will make my bricks? who will build my treasure and pleasure houses?" Foolish man! He thought the worst had come; but it had not, by any means. There was more yet; it takes a great while to get to the end of the woes that are caused by cruelty and injustice. From the vast sandy desert that

lay to the east, beyond the Red Sea, — from the great wild desert where no green thing grew, where there was nothing but gloomy caverns and desolate mountains that had been burned with volcanic fires, — from the hot, fierce desert there blew a wind so black and awful and terrible, that it seemed as if it would take up the very pyramids on its breath, and carry them away. It tore off from the flag-staffs before the temple the sacred banners of red and blue silk. Day and night, without ceasing, the wind blew; it tore up trees by the roots, it beat down the corn in the fields, it overturned barns and scattered the garnered grain like chaff; it went howling and shrieking through the sky, so that the ground itself trembled as at the blast of the judgment trumpet. Do you ask what brought this furious blast from the desert? It was sucked in by the close, stifling heat of the air in Egypt. You must have noticed often, how at the end of a very hot, sultry day in August, when man and beast panted and wilted because there was no air to breathe, the strong wind from the mountains or from the sea has come driving into the town, whirling the dust in clouds

through the streets, tearing awnings in pieces, slamming blinds, rattling sign-boards, filling the sky overhead with sticks and straws, and raising huge, threatening banks of thunderous cloud; if you will try to imagine such a thing happening, not in a single city, but in a whole land, you will perhaps have some idea of what this wind from the desert was, and why it came. It rushed in to refresh and revive the parched and smothering air, but it came in with such violence that it caused nothing but ruin and desolation. It came harsh and cold and biting, like the icy wind of death.

And with the black wind came enormous hail-stones, hard as flints, and sharp as points of steel. Nothing could stand before them. The cattle, made frantic by their sting, rushed madly across the fields; tender lambs and kids fell down bleeding and faint; the herbage was crushed beneath it; it ran whistling over the country, and the sound of it was like the hissing of scythes in the new grass. It was very awful. It made the hearts of the stoutest people quake within them. It made Pharaoh himself tremble in the midst of his

groves and gardens and palaces, in the heart of the kingly buildings that were piled up around him in mountains of marble and porphyry. He felt the wind through the thick walls of brick; he heard the hail crashing against the bronze gates, and hissing like myriads of serpents over his gilded roofs. The blaze of his thousand lamps in hall and chamber, the flare of torches in the hands of black slaves, the mild light of innumerable candles burning on the gold and silver candlesticks, struggled in vain against the dense blackness that poured in like solid midnight at door and window; the song, the music of bands, the noise of feasting, could not silence the roar of the elements, nor drown the cries of the people who begged him to spare them, and to let the Israelites go.

In and out, between the king and the people, stalked the giant form of Moses, the son of a slave woman, who by a wonderful chance had been educated in the king's palace, among the king's wise men. He was a middle-aged man now, dark and swarthy, with a long beard and a majestic figure. He had courage to tell the king,

in presence of his lords and priests, that all this woe had come upon his land because he had made slaves of his people, the Israelites. "And unless you will let my people go," said he to the king, "worse than you have suffered yet shall come upon you. Will you let them go?"

The king turned to his lords, and they laughed a loud laugh of scorn. He turned to his magicians and priests, and they said, "O King, this man Moses is a juggler, he is playing tricks on us."

"And can't you play tricks as well as he?" replied the king. "If he has raised this terrific storm by a trick, pray you stop it if you can by a trick."

"Will you let my people go?" said Moses.

"Will you let us go?" cried the miserable slaves without.

"O pray, let them go," begged the wretched Egyptians.

"Well, so be it, if you will have it so," muttered the king.

Moses went out, joyfully, to tell his people, and to make ready for the march. Hardly had he left the palace before the wind began to die away, for a time, and the hail fell less furiously. It seemed

as if the sky would clear. The king felt sorry for what he had done, and sent out orders by his guards to stop the fugitives. Back came Moses, his eye flashing with anger. "So, O King, you break your word. Beware! the storm is not over yet. Look yonder towards the desert! What do you see?" O horror! Was it a cloud? It was too black for a cloud, and it was alive. Was it an army? Armies do not move through the air as this does, and armies are composed of men; these are not men. But what are they? They are swifter than horses; the noise they make is like the rustling and clashing of armor; they fly on black wings like the wings of evil spirits, that beat the air like a storm; glittering lances seem to be flashing before them; they tumble and roll on like billows of the sea, and yet each drop of the vast wave is a living creature. They come nearer and nearer, with the swiftness of the wind; they come on the wind; for it is the desert wind that has brought them from the desert. They reach the city; they climb the high walls, and swarm over the towers, as if they were moving on level ground; their feet patter on the gilded roofs;

they tap at the windows; they creep in at every crack and opening; they are on the staircases; they are in the chambers; the streets are the color of ink with them; people tread them under their feet by thousands; and still the number of them increases; they devour everything as they go on, — the food on the tables, the meal in the barrel, the corn in the shed, they leave nothing; they pass over the valley of the Nile, and take up whatever the other plagues had spared. Every blade of grass, every ear of grain, every herb; their passing is like the passing of a prairie fire, — if there had been an Eden before them, there would have been a desert behind.

"Will you let my people go?" said Moses to the king.

"Yes, go; begone! let me never see you again."

Moses once more went out full of hope. The slaves began to get ready for their journey; their huts were alive with workers, — men, women, and children busy as bees in a hive; but it was no small matter to move half a milion of people out of a country, even when they took very little baggage with them. The movement had not fairly

begun, the preparations for it were hardly made, when the immense cloud of locusts from the wilderness passed wholly by, and were disappearing far away to the westward. Seeing them go, Pharaoh again repented of his promise to Moses, and again he sent out orders to stop the march. Once more the poor slaves settle down in despair in their filth and squalor and sorrow. Once more Moses goes to the palace and demands to see the king.

The king laughed at the idea that his keeping the Israelites had anything to do with the woes his subjects groaned under. "See," he said, "the locusts are gone, and you are not. They came with the wind from the desert; they have gone westward with the wind; they will not come back. The wind dies away, the hail ceases, the famine and the plagues cannot last long; I should be a fool to let you go, and lose your labor, now all the more necessary in the kingdom."

Moses replied: "Thou knowest, O King, what my people have suffered. Thou knowest how they have lived, — hungry, naked, overworked, beaten; in dirt and mire and wet. Thou canst see, if thou wilt see, that the miseries that have come upon

your land have come from keeping this vast body of men, women, and children in this horrible condition. As long as they are kept in that condition, so long will your land feel the effects of it in vermin and sickness and famine and ruin. Beware! I do not know where it will end; but the end has not come yet, — of that I am very sure. If you have not suffered enough, wait and suffer more."

A few days after this, the daughter of one of the chief nobles fell sick and died; the oldest son of another was struck with leprosy; a third saw his wife break out all over with disgusting boils and ulcers. The plagues were getting into the palaces at last, and doing in marble halls the work they had done in the mud cabins. One night a cry rose in the palace of the king himself, — men and women ran to and fro in terror; the plague had reached the chamber where slept on his bed of ivory, under curtains of silk, soothed by the waving of feather fans in the hands of slaves, and carefully guarded against contagion by aromatic odors from burning gums, — the king's eldest born, the heir of the kingdom, the idol of the people,

the hope of the empire. The disease touched him at midnight, — in the morning he was dead. All Egypt shuddered, as at the stroke of judgment. The priests gathered together in the temples. The great avenue of the Sphinxes, leading to the Temple of the Sun, was crowded with the white processions which flowed through the gigantic gateway of the Sun-god. There was a wail all over the city, — in every street and in every house. All other calamities were forgotten in this one.

In the midst of the confusion and terror of the time, when the nation was sunk in grief, Moses gave orders to the Israelites, secretly, that without noise or delay they should bestir themselves and make ready to go. There was no time to lose. Poor creatures! They had little to do, — no big trunks were to be packed, no large wardrobes were to be cared for, no long line of camels or mules had to be loaded with furniture. Food for a few days' journey was all they required. But that they could not stop to prepare carefully. They could not even wait long enough to make bread properly, but just rolled up the dough in great lumps, hard almost as bricks, without a par-

ticle of leaven in it to give it lightness. Their little stock of wares — broken plates and cracked dishes, their bread-boards, wooden-spoons, and eating-sticks — were tied up in bundles and lashed to their backs. The night of their setting out, each family ate its last meal in the cabin. It was a roasted lamb, which they pulled to pieces with their fingers, and devoured completely. They ate it standing, with shoes on their feet, staffs in their hands, and their long garments tucked up and tied about their waists for faster walking. After dark, one pitchy night, the word was given to start; and, silently, like an army of shadows, the bands clustered together and sped away from their home towards the desert. There was no sound of trumpet, no beating of hoof on the stones, no loud shouting or talking, no flaming torches going before them to show the way. The leaders knew the path; the rest followed, crowding on, fearful lest the Egyptians should press after them to destroy them. Day after day they travelled in silence and fear, — six hundred thousand people. They rested when they came to groves or shady places; but they rested no longer than was neces-

sary; for the Egyptians, enraged and furious, might come after them, at any moment, and cut them down like grass. Hungry and tired and wayworn they came after many days to the edge of the Red Sea.

It was night, and fearfully dark; the sky was overcast with clouds, hiding the light of the moon; not a star was to be seen; a low murmur ran round the camp; the people were beginning to wish themselves back again. Presently a strong wind rose and blew from the north, rolling up the waters in huge mountains, seeming to pile them up like a wall. Their fear increased every moment. Suddenly a sound was heard behind them, as of horses and chariots, very low, and far off. Scouts came running in, breathless. "The Egyptians are upon us! We shall all perish!"

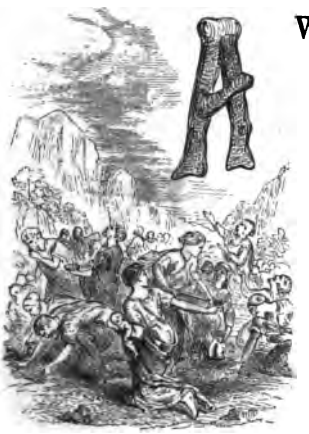
"Silence!" said Moses. "Silence!" said the leaders. There was a stillness as of death. The pursuers had come to a halt.

The steady north wind, by this time, had driven the waters from the narrow isthmus of Suez, near which they were; the tide was fast running out, and the column with rapid step began the crossing.

There was no other way of escape. If found where they then were in the morning, their fate was sealed. The army of the king would be upon them at dawn, and kill them or drag them back to their slavery. They must cross the sea, and without boats. Better to drown so, than to be drowned in their own blood. There was but little water at the place marked for the passage. The first company made the venture, another followed, a third, a fourth, — they trod on one another's heels, so eager was the haste. The moon shone fitfully a few moments at a time, giving just light enough to reveal the horror of their situation. On the right hand were the billows piled up, a foamy wall. On the left hand the wind was blowing a gale; under their feet was the shining mud of the bottom. Every instant it seemed as if they must be overwhelmed, and the roar was deafening. Splash! splash! went the crowd, hour after hour, all night through. As the day broke, the last company entered the channel. Quick, quick! the tide turns in an hour! The wind is slackening; the waves will roll back! "Come on!" the leaders shout; the people crowd forward through the narrow gorge, fearful, but seeing no way of escape.

As the day broke, there was stir in the camp of the Egyptians, and over the ridge to the west the gleam of spears shone in the early light. Squadron on squadron the horse appeared, and as they saw the Israelites, whom they supposed were cut off from all escape, slipping away from them through the sea, a terrible cry of rage and fury burst from their ranks. On they came, horses and riders, chariots and drivers, bent on capturing as many as they could of those who were behind, and of killing those whom they could not capture. But it was too late. The last of the slaves had put their feet into the channel, and were already half-way across. The wind was dying away; the tide had turned, and the waves were flowing back to their old place. Few of the pursuers who rode into the channel of the sea escaped to the shore again. The mighty billows washed them away,—horses and chariots were dashed in pieces, and the waters, for miles around, were strewn with the wrecks. Amid the groans and cries of the drowning men a noise of singing rose high from the opposite shore. It was the voice of Moses singing the song of the slave's deliverance.

MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS.



WAY out in the Arabian Wilderness, on the other side of the Red Sea, which cuts them off from the pleasant, rich land of Egypt, the Israelites have left forever their dwelling-place of many generations, — the most splendid kingdom on the globe; home of science, philosophy, religion, art; home of the wealthiest, wisest, greatest people on the face of the earth. They have left the wonderful Thebes and its hundred gates, the mysterious Nile stream, that poured into the Mediterranean by seven mouths; the Temple of the Sun, grand-

est of all houses of worship; the avenue of Sphinxes; the purple obelisks, shooting into the air like petrified sunbeams; the solemn statues catching the morning rays in their stony eyes, and giving an answering music to the greeting of the God of Day.

They have left the rich fields, happy in their harvests of grain and grass, the pastures dotted over with browsing cattle, the trees laden with every species of delicious fruit. The sluggish, lazy, slavish life of dependence they have given up. They are out in the Arabian wilderness, the most terrible of all deserts, and behind them, not to be crossed, rolls the Red Sea. Around them, without beginning, without end, without limit, lies the boundless waste of sand. Nothing to be seen but sand, except some ragged limestone mountains in the far distance, more fearful to think of than the sand itself, for the sight of them makes them think of lions, jackals, and poisonous serpents. Sand before and sand behind, sand all the time, day and night, summer and winter, to sleep on, to walk on, still always and always sand; sand hot as fiery embers beneath their feet, blazing

like fiery sparks before their eyeballs, stinging them with its crystal points like insects, drifting by them in great clouds, blinding, suffocating, overpowering, maddening. Sand and sun; sun as omnipresent and everlasting as the sand, and infinitely more terrible, making them hide their faces in the daytime, piercing their thickest shelter, thrusting his flaming sword again and again through screen and veil and tent, and touching the very heart of their hearts with the searing blade. No deep, cool grottos, no soft clouds, no green garden spots, no groves of date-trees, dropping luscious fruit; no fresh cascades from the hills; no murmuring fountains, no sweet rivers to bathe in, no heights from which they can catch the breath of the morning or the evening wind. Few and scanty, at long intervals, little clumps of wretched grass peep up above the sand; and the stunted shrubs, which nature put there for the camels, provoke a hunger they cannot satisfy. The sparse bushes are haggard with drought. The scattered palms look as if a curse had fallen on them, which forbade their bearing fruit again forever.

The sand cheats as well as scorches and tortures

the poor travellers. For often, as they toil on in the heat of the day, they see before them what seems a lake of fresh water. The broad, still sheet, unruffled by boat or breeze, stretches far away, cool and fair, with winding creeks, jutting promontories, shelving shores, the quiet surface reflecting the sunbeams that laugh and play on it. Many and many a time they hurry forward, gasping and foaming at the mouth, only to find their fair lake of water a delusion, a cruel trick put on them by the atmosphere and the sand, or else the deceitful glittering of salt that fills the place where a lake had once been. More than one time, on reaching such a place, they turn their heads backward, and see, as they think, a beautiful lake, where they know there can be nothing but sand. It was long before they learned not to run after these imaginary lakes; for the sight of them was very tempting, and they still hoped that this or that one might be real.

The dwellers in the desert were very few indeed; for there was nothing there to support a large number of people. The patient camel, who journeys there, carries fountains of water in his

stomach, and eats his poor food over and over again. Men and women cross the wilderness only when they must, on their way from one city to another; then they go in small parties, and take food with them to sustain life on the desolate way. Even the Bedouin Arabs might starve in those places where the Israelites were if they had nothing to eat but what the desert gave them.

But the Israelites took nothing with them in the shape of food. No long train of wagons had they, loaded with army supplies, no commissary staff, no sutlers. They did not even take hard bread. They could not have taken enough for many days, and they came away from Egypt in too much haste to put up enough for ever so few days. And here they were, thousands and thousands of people, — men, women, children, — an immense multitude of mouths to feed. They had no camels to cook and eat, no asses, no domestic animals, no rats or mice or frogs. If they had been lazy, luxurious people, going into the wilderness for the pleasure of it, or from motives of idle curiosity, because they were discontented, angry, uncomfortable, because they had nothing else to

do, or because they had too much to do, they would have dried up and perished in a week.

But they were brave, believing people, full of faith in God and of trust in Providence. They went forth in a great spirit of devotion. They felt that they were in the way of their duty; that the Lord sent them; that the Lord would guide them, guard them, and bring them safely to the end. They were ready to meet any danger, to bear any hardship; they were ready even to die on the road; but they must do the Lord's will.

Now, when people go into the wilderness — into any kind of wilderness — in a spirit like this, for conscience' sake, for love's sake, for God's sake, no matter how desolate the desert may be, though it furnish not so much as a drop of water or a blade of grass, they do not starve. They have all they ask for, — food and drink and clothing and shelter. When other people would surely die, they surely live. Where other people would faint and fall, they go forward. The Israelites, the old story says, fared well, — rather luxuriously in fact. They were like the fowls of the air, that sowed not, reaped not, nor gathered into barns,

yet had their mouths filled by the Heavenly Father. Every evening, flocks of quails flew over the camp, in order that they might drop down dead among the people; just plentiful enough for their evening meal. Every morning the face of the wilderness was covered thick with dew, and when the dew was dried up, the ground was crusted with small, round beads, that looked like hoar frost. The first time they saw it, the people cried out, "Manna! manna!" "What is it? what is it?" So it was called Manna, or "What is it?" It was found every morning at the same hour, in quantity just sufficient for the morning meal. It was sweet to the taste, and answered excellently well the purpose of bread. They supposed it to be such bread as was eaten in heaven. Each man gathered in his apron as much as he needed to eat, and whatever he took was as much as he needed. If he took little, it was enough; if he took much, it was no more than enough. All he took he ate, and he had no wish to eat more than he took. The manna would not keep from one day to another, but in a few hours rotted and became very offensive. In the words of the old

story, "it bred worms and stank." Only on the sixth day, there fell a supply for the day after, which was the Sabbath; for the people were not allowed to do the least work on the Sabbath. So the people never suffered from want of food. They had neither food to get nor food to keep. They had no care for what they should eat or for what they should drink.

For water was furnished to them as wonderfully as bread and meat was. They came sometimes to bitter fountains, so bitter that they could not swallow the water, however thirsty they might be. It seemed as if they would die of thirst sooner than drink, but there was always a plant near by whose leaf corrected the bitterness, and no sooner did they put their lips to the spring than the water tasted sweet, and quenched their thirst as water never had done before. Often they found themselves in parts of the desert where there were no fountains at all, not even bitter ones; perhaps a huge rock, so hot from the intense rays of the sunbeams that it might well, they fancied, dry up the waters of a lake; a rock like a furnace, sending a fiery breath far out into the desert, threatening to

blast everything that came near. Their great leader had only to touch it with his staff; the water bubbled from its stony centre, gurgled down its stony sides, ran in rivulets over the sand to the farthest corner of the camp, and the panting, dying company had drink without the trouble of going to the spring. And this went on, if we may believe it, forty years, till the wilderness wandering was ended, and the Promised Land was reached.

Your wide-open eyes, my children, look as if they wanted to ask me where the quails and waters came from; if they were real quails and real waters. Now, that is a matter that I do not pretend to know much about; I tell the story as I have read it; but all I do know about it, and all I think about it, I am willing to tell you.

But some foolish people, let me tell you first, who will not remember that corn is made of gases, or that oxen are made of grass, and who must visit the shambles before they believe in the possibility of dinner, laugh at the whole story I have been telling. They say that the Israelites, if they went into the desert at all, ate what they found,

and nothing more, — dates, locusts, wild honey; a goat now and then possibly, or such birds as the winds brought from the south. All the rest, the quails and the manna, they ate in imagination. They were very hungry, and very hungry people will eat the commonest food as if it was the nicest delicacy, and will talk of a poor dinner of herbs as if it had been a feast of fat things. The half-starving Israelites probably felt that the small pickings they found among the herbage, the gum that oozed out of the wood of the bushes, the dews they sipped or sucked from the leaves or wrung from their woollen garments, was some rich God-send; and they may well have thought, as they nibbled and sipped, that they had never tasted anything half as good even in Egypt.

Then, again, these foolish, unbelieving folks say, the Israelites wanted very little, were easily satisfied. If one wants nothing, nothing is enough, and he is as well off as if he had everything. If one wants little, little is enough, and he is as well off as if he had a great deal. The naked savage who needs no clothes is as rich as the English duke with his court dress. A little fellow who

wants no more than a morsel of bread, and has a loaf of cake put into his hand, is as proud of his dainty eating as the other lad who has partridges and mince-pie every day. In that hot climate people needed very little nourishment to support life; and when a flock of birds came, as now and then it might come, it was as if they were fed by the hand of the Lord himself.

Or, to make another guess, the smallest favors were thankfully received. The Israelites were grateful at that time. They had just escaped from slavery; they had just been rescued from drowning. They were ready to give thanks for anything and everything. They felt as if they were loaded down with blessings, when they had only what other people would have made a wry face at as unfit to touch. Gratitude sweetens a great many bitter fountains, and finds miracles in a great many ordinary things. So that these poor wanderers, with big tears in their eyes, expecting nothing, looking for nothing, almost hoping for nothing, munched their hard grass as if it had been bread dropped right out of the clouds, and wet their lips with their own tears, fancying their

drink was nectar. Besides, the minds of the wanderers were so full of exciting thoughts that they could live for a long time without eating, and without feeling the need of eating. They were in a state of enthusiasm. All that they had gone through, all that they might yet have to go through, — fears of danger, hopes of safety, wonder what was to become of them, — exercised them severely, and left them little time to think of eating and drinking. They fed on their memories, — airy food, but enough. When the soul is fed, the body may go starving. They whose heads are the emptiest call for the fullest stomach. People have lived many a day on faith. Jesus, one time, was very hungry and thirsty and faint with travel. He sat by a well, and begged a woman for water; he sent his followers to the village, hard by, to get food. The woman, instead of giving him the water, began to talk with him about religion, and so interested did he become in the talk that he forgot the water entirely; his friends came from the village with bread and meat; he did not care for the bread and meat. He was dining heartily on his thoughts.

Now, if the Israelites were so full of joy and faith, say these doubters about the celestial quails and the miraculous manna, that they did not feel hungry; or if they were so grateful that sour grass seemed a delicacy; or if they wanted so little, that what they found in the desert was more than enough; or if they were so hungry that they did not care what they ate; you will perhaps understand how they were able to live in the desert without any miraculous supply of food. And you will, perhaps, understand how their imagination made flocks of quails out of a few peeps, and heaps of manna out of the sap of a juicy bush.

For my part, my dear children, I have but little patience with the dreary people who flatten out good stories, and think they have done a good thing when they have turned a diamond into a load of charcoal. I would rather have the diamond, and buy my coal. I like a thousand times better the other sort of people, who, instead of trying to change poetry into prose, try to change prose into poetry. I like a thousand times better the people who say that this story of the

Manna is a great deal truer than if it was word for word true; who enjoy it the more because it is hard to believe; who say that the story is not to be read as a common story; that it is not a story at all of certain worthies, ages ago, who went into a desert and there had their stomachs filled by miracle; but that it is the story of the human soul in the desert of sorrow or temptation, ministered to by angels; who say the quails were not real birds, but sweet, nourishing truths; the manna was no solid substance that could be gathered, cooked, and put into the mouth, but rich hopes and beliefs which sustained the heart. The bitter water was disappointment, whose harsh taste was taken away by patience and trust; the rock was hardship, trial, and suffering; the rod with which Moses smote it was the brave resolve of a strong, confident will; and the fountain which bubbled out at the smiting was a fresh purpose, a new life, a gushing spirit of gladness and power.

If we read the story in this way, it is one of the truest stories that was ever written. It is as true as Truth itself. It is true for everybody; and it is true of everybody; and everybody knows it is true.

Nobody, I venture to say, ever goes into the desert bravely, nobly, trustfully, without being fed there. There is always manna in the wilderness. None starve in the waste but the idle, and they starve wherever they may be. I read some time ago the following pretty account of something that happened in the Island of Ceylon. Two little boys, going from one house to another, across a lonely and uninhabited part of the island, lost their way; as they were wandering about in search of the right path, a moaning sound struck their ears as of some creature in pain. They were brave lads, and instead of running away, they went to the spot whence the sound came. A wounded, lame monkey lay under a tree moaning and writhing. The elder of the two boys, knowing that they were far from home, and must make all the haste they could, alarmed lest it might be dark when they found a shelter, if they found one at all before night, was at first unwilling to stop and see how much the poor creature was hurt, and whether anything could be done for its relief. But the younger would not pass the sufferer by, but stooped down, took him up in his arms, patted him, fondled

him, and insisted on bearing him along in his bosom till they found a house of shelter. The hours flew on fast; the little boys got farther and farther out of their way; they became hungry, but, worse than that, they became thirsty, for the day was very hot. But there was no water in sight, not so much as the smallest pool of water. They sat down under a tree fainting with fatigue, and tried to forget their suffering in sleep. The monkey rested, and, well enough to crawl on his hands and feet, disappeared, but soon came back, making strange gestures as if he wanted the boys to go with him. They rose to their feet and went in the direction he led them. He did not go far, but stopped at a cluster of flowers which were shaped like pitchers, and these tiny flower-pitchers were full of water. The boys drank, were refreshed, and went on their way. That was a fountain in the wilderness; just as wonderful, perhaps, as that which the Israelites found. I dare say the boys thought its being there miraculous, and talked about it when they got home very much as the Bible historian talks of the water from the rock. It was there all the time; it was there for

everybody; but they would not have found it if they had not shown kindness to the monkey. They were in the wilderness on an errand of duty, and they did their duty in the wilderness, and so the manna came.

And now I will tell you of another little boy who was pushed out into the wilderness by Providence and fed by manna there. His desert was a waste of poverty and loneliness and misery. He never knew his father or his mother; or, if he ever knew them, he had forgotten them long before I saw him; for they died when he was a child. Suddenly, he never knew how, he found himself in that most desolate of deserts to the poor, a great city, where the people drifted by him like immense clouds of sand. He had no work, and of course he had no bread, save such scanty crumbs and bits as he could pick up as wanderers in the wilderness pick up herbs, or as children lost in a wood pick berries. It was very small dinner; but he did not starve; when he went to bed, he never knew where his breakfast was to come from; yet, in the morning, there was his manna; no more than enough; but enough for him. At evening

he did not know where he should sleep; but the heap of straw, or the soft side of a stone under some portico, or a pile of comfortable rags in the corner of a cellar was ready when he was. He never said much about his wandering in this wilderness, but if he had said all he thought in his grateful heart, no doubt he would have spoken of kind servant girls as if they had been angels, and of cold victuals as if they had been miraculous flocks of quails and loaves dropped from the skies.

From this wilderness, the Lord pushed him into another, which was a huge, huge almshouse off on an island, filled with poor, wretched, orphaned, deserted boys like himself. There he was well taken care of, so far as his body was concerned, for he had a bed to sleep on and food to eat. But so far as his heart was concerned, he was in a desert. For he was not like the other boys, he was delicate, timid, and shrinking; he was very gentle and affectionate, could not bear noise or coarse words. Most of the lads in the almshouse were disagreeable, many of them were vicious, and he did not enjoy their society. Besides all this, he was a pale, sickly boy, who

needed tender nursing; he had a disease of the heart, which made him unable to work or to join in the sports of the rest. Nor was this the worst; he was a poor humpback, all crooked and twisted; his shoulders nearly as high as his head, his bones out of place, hardly a muscle or a nerve being where it is in healthy boys and girls. The people in the almshouse seemed to care less for him than for the rest, because he was so puny and ugly. The visitors who came passed by him with looks of disgust, his pleading little face having no interest for them, because it was so withered and old looking. People came there sometimes to find lads to work on their farms or in their factories, to help in their stores or to serve in their families. They never looked at him; they went to the tall, strong, healthy, happy boys, with plump faces, bright cheeks, and sparkling eyes. Them they took away, one by one, and he was left alone; his desert growing more and more desolate day by day. He lay on his little bed, and thought of them with their kind masters, earning a living, growing up to be men, having homes of their own; while for him there was nothing but sand,

sand, sand, and still nothing but sand; no work, no money, no home, no love. But he did not complain; he was patient and trusting and meek.

And the manna was sent. A kind nurse took pity on him for the same reason that others passed him by; she gave him the little delicacies he needed, and every morning and evening he was sure of her sweet smile and her cheerful word. How his heart lived on those smiles and words! They were quails and sweet manna to him. They kept him alive. Without them his hungry, thirsty little heart would have dried up and withered away. In the evening he went to sleep comforted by the thought that he should find them by his bedside in the morning. Through the slow, weary, painful hours of the day he was encouraged by the hope of finding them the same in the evening. There they always were, better a thousand times to him than the richest dishes that could be cooked, — every word more nourishing than a hearty meal; every smile more refreshing than a spring of water, or than wine from the most luscious grapes of Germany or France. He could bear all, forget all, so long as he had those;

— all his pain and weakness, all his ugliness and deformity. He had bread of Heaven to eat, — bread from the heaven of a tender, true heart.

He was not all his life in this wilderness; the Israelites were not all their lives in their wilderness. One day the face of an angel looked at him; the hand of an angel touched him; he was led away from the almshouse to a pleasant, comfortable home, as to a land flowing with milk and honey. There he lived till another angel took him away to his last home.

There is always manna in the wilderness; but none get it save they who go into the wilderness. Those who need most receive most. There was once a poor man who went into court-houses, jails, penitentiaries, into the dreariest places of the city, seeking the boys and girls who for some mischief they had done, for some small theft, for taking a handkerchief from a gentleman's pocket, or snatching a loaf of bread from a baker's shop, or breaking a pane of glass, or sleeping under a porch when there was no other place to sleep in, had been taken up and carried before the judge, and sent to the house of correction, or to the prison.

He wanted to save these little fellows. But it cost a great deal of money to pay their fines, clothe them, send them into the country, find them good homes with kind Christian people. But the money always came, he said, like manna in the desert. Just at the right moment, the money or food or clothing was put into his hands. He always had what was necessary for the day.

If I were to tell you all the stories I know about people who have gone straight out into the wilderness, and been fed there, I should fill a little book with them, and then have enough more to fill a great book. I have been fed in the wilderness a great many times myself. There is a famous man in England who has built a very large asylum, and feeds there, year after year, hundreds of poor boys and girls; and all he has to give them, he says, is the manna that falls from the skies of love, as wonderfully as the quails fell from heaven. Some day you will read his life. His name is George Muller.

The manna comes in every possible shape. Sometimes it is food for the body. Sometimes it is food for the mind, — a book, a conversation,

a piece of knowledge. Sometimes it is food for the heart, — a kind word, a kiss, a sweet thought of patience or love. Sometimes it is food for the spirit, — a good friend, a word of praise or encouragement, a new hope, a happy feeling of duty done or of good performed, a thought of heaven and of the noble ones that live there and will be seen there one day. God has all kinds of bread. They who are never hungry never know what delicious bread can be made out of stones. They who are never thirsty have no idea what sweet waters are ready to bubble up from the sands. The sorrowful always have a cup put to their lips in the garden. The brave are always comforted by angels in the desert.

"But you have not told us whether you really believe that flocks of birds dropped down into the camp of the Israelites, and that real bread was flung down from the skies."

"Why, yes, I have; only you thought the story was a little stupid, and did not listen. I said that the quails were truths that came from the highest heaven, and fell into their minds, and that the manna was love that covered their hearts as thickly as grain covers a harvest field."

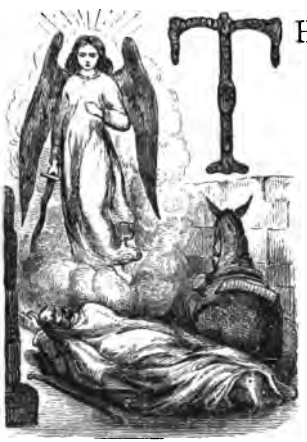
"But that is what all people have."

"So much the better; would you rather that the Israelites ate the whole?"

"But where is the miracle then?"

"There is none. And again I say, so much the better. Do you not say the same?"

THE PROPHET AND HIS ASS.



THE fugitive slaves became, in time, a great and terrible army. Wandering in the mighty desert beyond the Red Sea, under the fierce sun, hungry and thirsty, they became used to every kind of hardship. Fighting with the wild beasts — with lions and serpents, and the wilder tribes of the wilderness — gave them courage. Long marches made them patient; in their camp life they learned the soldier's drill and discipline. They had no horses nor chariots, and were all the stronger on their feet. In the midst of their host was carried, wherever

they went, a beautiful box of costly wood, in which were kept the stone tablets of their holy Law. At night the stillness was broken by their camp song. And from tent to tent ran the benediction: —

"The Lord bless and keep thee:
The Lord make his face to shine upon thee,
And cover thee with his favor:
The Lord lift his countenance upon thee,
And give thee peace."

They swept onward with a force which nothing could stand against. Cities fell before them, armies were scattered, kings were conquered. They made their way steadily towards the delicious land that was flowing with milk and honey. There was dreadful panic among the chiefs and princes of the country, for great walled-towns, with towers and battlements, only waited to hear the blast of their trumpets, to open their gates and let the army of the Lord come in.

What was to be done? Balak, the king of the Moabites, a mighty people, rich and cultivated, sent out messengers to all the Bedouin chiefs in the neighborhood, asking them to gather together

and help him beat back this host, that "licked up all around them," he said, "as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." They came, the wild, savage men, bringing with them frightful stories of the numbers, the power, the ferocity, of the coming foe. Nothing they could do, it seemed, would be of the least use. They must make sacrifices and pray; they must get the holy men together and ask them to hurl curses sharper than spears at their enemies.

Now, it happened, that away off, beyond the desert, away off by the river Euphrates, to the East, near the rising sun, there lived a famous prophet, who was known far and wide all over the Eastern land. His name was Balaam. "Suppose we send for Balaam," said the princes, "and ask him to come and curse for us these slaves from Egypt. He is a great prophet. Whatever he declares will come true. If we can get him on our side, we shall prevail." So the sheiks, with a long caravan, set off for Balaam, carrying rich presents to bribe him to say what they wanted. Balaam heard their message, saw their gifts, and wanted much to go back with them. But some-

thing told him not to go; it would be wrong. He knew who the Hebrews were; he had heard of their sorrows and their strange deliver nce from slavery; he felt that they were coming to root out idolatry from the land, and to bring the worship of the true God. He ought instantly to have sent the king's messengers away. But there were the gifts; there was all that gold and silver. It would be best not to be hasty in making up his mind. He would sleep on the matter. So, instead of sending the messengers off, he asked them to come in and pass the night; he would tell them in the morning what he would do.

In the night Balaam's conscience awoke and troubled him sorely; it would not let him sleep. It told him almost as plainly as if it spoke in words, that if he went with these men, and did what they wanted him to do, he would be guilty of a great sin, which all the honors in the world would not make up for. So sure was he of this, that in the morning he told the messengers he could not go; it was impossible: he had pressing engagements at home. Back again, across the desert, went the dark chiefs without their prophet.

"But come he must," said Balak. "We will send again."

This time there went a larger caravan, with greater chiefs, costlier presents, all kinds of promises, very attractive and tempting indeed. The princes filled the prophet's house with their splendors, and said to him: "Come back with us. Come and curse these cruel strangers, and there is nothing you shall not have."

"I will go with you, if my duty will let me," says Balaam; "but if my conscience tells me not to go with you, I can't go; for a whole houseful of gold and silver I cannot. But come in; have some supper; spend the night with me: in the morning I will tell you what I will do."

Another sleepless night for Balaam. To go, or not to go, was the question. To go, was to do what he knew was wrong; not to go, was to lose all those good things, — the gold and the silver, the robes and the jewels, the slaves and the camels. Which should he give up? But why must he give up either? Might he not have both? That was worth thinking of. Why might he not go to Balak's court and see what happened when

he got there? Perhaps his conscience would let him curse the Hebrews after all; he might see things differently; he might learn more about these strangers; he might discover that they were a very bad set of men and women; and then to curse them would be his duty. Of course if it was not his duty, he should not do it; if his conscience told him to bless them, he would bless them, let it cost what it would. At all events, there could be no harm in his going. It would be time enough when he reached the end of his journey to decide what he would do next.

In the morning he said he would go back with the caravan. So he called for his ass, and made ready to set out. He called for his ass, because he was a prophet and a very great person. In the East, only the greatest people rode on asses; here only the smallest do so. The Oriental ass was a very elegant creature, slender, tall, and graceful. He made a very handsome show on public occasions. No doubt this ass of Balaam was one of the finest of his kind. He certainly was one of the wisest, as we shall see. For as they went pleasantly on their way, all of a sudden,

right there in the road, the ass came to a stand. Balaam saw nothing in the road, but the beast clearly did; for he shook all over, and laid his long ears back on his neck, as if he was beside himself with fear. "What is the matter with the beast?" cried the prophet. "Does he know better than I do whether he ought to proceed or not? Does he presume to say I shall not go when I mean to go? He will see what persuasion there is in a cudgel. And down the cudgel came, blow after blow, on the poor brute's haunches. But he only shied off into a field full of brambles and briers, which stung the poor prophet sadly in the legs. Down came the cudgel again, and away shied the creature to the other side into a bog, black and soft, in which the lower regions of the prophet were smeared with mud. At length he was persuaded to move on a little way; but it was only to get into a worse place still, a very narrow pass, just wide enough for one beast to traverse at a time, and a steep precipice on each side. In the very middle of this pass he stopped again, and all he did when Balaam laid on the stick was to grind first against the rocks on the right hand,

then against the rocks on the left hand, till the poor prophet's torn and muddy legs were bruised sorely. Thwack, thwack, thwack went the stick. The beast rushed forward desperately a few steps. The prophet thought surely all would go smoothly now, when in an instant down he fell on his stomach, rolling the great man in the dirt. The rage of the holy person was beyond all bounds. He cursed the poor brute, he kicked him, he laid on the cudgel more roundly than ever, he would have killed him if he had had a knife. King Balak would have been quite satisfied with such curses as the poor ass got. There he lay, panting, gasping, quivering in every limb; his white skin dark with sweat, and spotted here and there with blood from the heavy blows of the stick. Deep groans broke from him, and tender sighs which found their way to his master's hard heart, who looked at him more softly, and said at length: "Poor beast! what ails thee? Thou hast never behaved in this way before. Thou hast carried me faithfully many years, and hast always been patient and obedient. Thou hast been a little stubborn sometimes, and sometimes a little slow, but thou

hast never before gone off into the brambles or the mire to avoid the straight road; and never before didst thou lie down and refuse to go a step farther. What ails thee now, that thou dost stop on this journey, of all others, when I am going to tell the Lord's will to King Balak? Why dost thou refuse to carry me on the Lord's errand?" At these words the ass twirled his long ears and brayed loudly, as much as to say, "Balaam, you are not going on the Lord's errand; you know you are not. You are going on your own errand; you are going after the gold and silver. You had better cudgel yourself than me." But Balaam did not take the hint, and went on: "O donkey of mine, hast thou been so long with me, and yet has none of my sanctity passed into thee? Hast thou carried the great prophet so many years, and yet art thou no more than a common donkey? Canst thou not see an inch before thy nose?" Another groan, more like a bellow, from the beast, which seemed to say: "I am not the donkey; you are. It is you who cannot see an inch before your nose, for you do not see the angel who stands in the way with a flaming sword." At that moment,

Balaam's eyes were opened, and he seemed to see straight before him, filling all the passage, tall and of awful aspect, a figure terrible to behold, who made a wild gesture, waving him back. The prophet, in fear, turned to flee towards his home. But he had gone a few steps only, when, looking round, the figure had vanished. "Fie," he said to himself, rubbing his eyes, "why should I go home? I am doing nothing wrong; whatever the Lord bids me say, I shall say, whether it be to bless or to curse. This was only a spectre, a sort of dream or vision. I will push on." And on he went, riding his poor lame donkey.

They reached the king's court. Everything was ready for his arrival. The nobles and chiefs were gathered together, and were very glad to see the prophet. The prophet was not so glad to see them. To say the truth, he felt a little awkward, for he had made up his mind to bless the king's enemies if he was told to do so; but not unless he could not help it, and he was afraid he could not help it.

"What shall I do," said the king to the prophet, "to beat back these people, who are invading my

land? I must have the aid of the strongest God. Tell me how I may get it. Shall I build high altars and kill calves of a year old? Shall I bring thousands of rams? Shall I pour out oil in rivers? Or will it be necessary for me to sacrifice my oldest boy before I can appease him?"

And Balaam answered: "Man, you know what you ought to do to please the Lord. All he asks of you is that you will do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly before him."

Ah, Balaam! That was a noble answer. If only you had acted as if you believed in it! Why, after saying such fine words, did you go to work with the king, and try to please the Lord with those very calves of his? As if you did not know at the very first that it could be of no use! As if you did not know at the outset that you could not do what the king wished!

The morning after Balaam's arrival, the king took him, with a splendid cavalcade of nobles, to see one of his great, rich cities, that he might be fully sensible of the power and magnificence of his majesty, and might feel that it was well worth his while to bless the lord of so much grandeur. They

gave a day to visiting the wonders of the place. The next day, after breakfast, they went to the top of a high hill, one of the lower peaks of a great range of mountains, to get a wider view of the king's dominions, as they spread out, mile after mile of towns and villages beneath. The effect was not lost.. Balaam was struck with the beauty of the scene and the wealth of the people, and was strongly inclined to think that he had better not curse them if he could help it. Perhaps the Lord might be bought off with presents, after all. So he advised the king to build seven huge altars of stone on the spot, and for each altar to prepare a bullock and a ram. "Now," he said, "stand by the altar with your princes and grandees, while the victims are consuming by the fire, praying and beating your breasts with all your might; and I will go to one side and ask the Lord if he will let me bless you." Then the king and all the nobles stood round the altars praying and tearing their hair, and thumping vigorously on their bosoms; the blood of the bulls and rams ran in great red streams down the hillside; the clouds of smoke, seven in number, blackened the skies;

the tongues of flame from the dry wood leaped out like forked lightning from the cloud; the air was sick with the stench of the burning flesh. Off in the bushes stood Balaam, earnestly telling the Lord what was going on, and what it all meant. "See, O Lord," he said, "these fat gifts, that Balak has brought you. Balak is a great king, and all he asks in return for these fine bullocks and rams is, that you will let me curse his enemies." But it was of no use. The Lord told Balaam that the king's enemies were his friends, whom he had brought out from slavery, and meant to raise to a great people. He could not curse them; he must bless them.

Balaam went back to the king, and told him sadly what the Lord had said, — that these enemies of his were to become very numerous, while his own people were to become smaller and smaller. The king was angry, and broke out in furious rebuke against the prophet. "Did I bring you here to tell me this? Did you come all the way across the desert to tell me this?"

"What can I do?" replied Balaam. "I would oblige you if I could. Nothing would please me

more than to vent the curses you desire. But I must let out of my mouth what is put into it. They are the Lord's words, not mine. If he tells me to curse, I curse; if he tells me to bless, why I must bless."

"But come," said the king, "let us try again. Perhaps the offering will be more acceptible if offered in another place." So up they went. Balaam with them, to the top of a higher mountain; to a spot which commanded a finer view still, and was a very sacred spot, beside; much nearer God than the other place was. The king thought that perhaps the prophet's mind had not been duly impressed with his grandeur. Under Balaam's direction the altars were built again; the bullocks and rams were killed; and while the rest went through their hocus-pocus, he went off among the bushes to draw his magic circle and wave his wand and make his mystical signs in the air, on the ground, on his breast. This time, the Lord gave him a very short answer indeed; and it was but few minutes before Balaam, crestfallen, returned with precisely the same message he had brought before, — that it was of no use to try spells and enchant-

ments; that God was not a man, to say what he did not mean; nor was he a man, to take back what he had once said. He loved the Hebrew slaves; he had brought them out of Egypt; he meant that they should become a great people; and there was an end of the matter.

Balaam spoke with much energy, and yet he did not more than half believe what he said; for he was quite ready to try the foolish experiment again. And when the king proposed to make another attempt, hoping that the third time it would not fail, he fell in with the plan instantly. They went now to the very highest summit of the mountain range, from which they could see the whole country for leagues around. On one side the vast desert he had crossed stretched its sea of sand towards the Euphrates. To the south was a region of wilderness and mountain, reaching to the Red Sea, and beyond that to the deserts of Arabia. To the north the lovely hills and vales of Palestine, green and wooded, with old stone cities crowning their heights, and pleasant villages nestling in their bosoms, invited to great depths of cool shade, and delicious watercourses. They

looked down and saw in the plain, like an army of locusts or emmets, the tents of the Hebrew slaves, an immense multitude. They stood very high; so high that it seemed as if they might take hold of God's hand. "Surely the smoke of our sacrifice will reach his nostrils from here," said the king; "and he can hear the voice of our prayer."

"Very well," Balaam replied. "Build your seven altars, kill your seven bulls and rams, and we will see." They went to work once more. But this time the Lord did not wait for the prophet to go into the bushes, but made him speak right out where he stood. The man was inspired. His face was set; his eyes stared wide open; the words poured from his mouth as if he had nothing to do with them. He began to describe the future of the ransomed slaves, — how they should spread like the valleys and gardens beneath them, how they should grow like aloes and cedars; like lions he seemed to see them springing through the thickets; like unicorns he seemed to see them crashing through their enemies and crunching their bones.

At the beginning of this speech, Balak stood

dumb; he could not speak for astonishment and rage. The moment he recovered himself, stamping his foot, clapping his hands, he broke in furiously: "Stop there! What are you doing? I asked you to curse, and you would not; then I asked you at least not to bless. And behold you are uttering blessing on blessing. Do you know who I am? Do you know what I can do to you? Do you know I can send you back in disgrace?"

Balaam answered: "O king, I say what it is given me to say. I cannot choose. I am going home; but, before I go, hear the rest of my message. I see a 'star' rising from that dark multitude, before whose splendor the stars of the nations shall be blotted out; I see a 'sceptre' rising from that dark multitude, before which the sceptres of the nations shall be broken, and their power shall pass away. I see the cities overthrown; I see the vineyards desolate; I see new cities springing up, and new vineyards planted. And what is this I see? A mighty power from the east sweeping down over these new cities and vineyards, carrying people away into slavery. And, O horror! what is this? Ships from the great sea, — ships

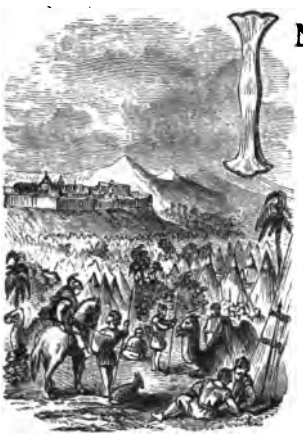
with armed men, who shall put an end to all the empires, even to the banks of the Euphrates! Assyria is gone! The nations of the East are passed away!" He spoke, and passed away himself beyond the desert, to his own place. Not long after he passed away from the earth; for Balaam the son of Peor, the prophet, who would have cursed Israel had he dared, fell by the sword of the army of Moses. Enraged because the Lord would not let him curse the Hebrews and get the rich things which King Balak had promised him, he tried to vent his wrath on the Hebrews as if they had been the cause of his disappointment. To this end he, by his arts, spread among them a frightful disease, which carried off thousands of their warriors. To avenge this evil, Moses marched against his people, and the prophet came to a miserable end.

If he had had such an ear for God's voice, or such an eye for God's presence, as his donkey possessed, if he had had such a power of standing still at the right moment, he would have spared himself the long desert journey, the hard fight with his conscience, the wrath of the king, the crime

of slaying thousands of people who, as he knew, were God's friends; the sorrow of a guilty soul, the ruin of his own fortune, the loss of his own life, and the destruction of his people.

We have all in us something of the ass and something of the angel. Sometimes the ass is inspired when the angel is not. Conscience is not very nimble or brilliant; it has a dumb and stupid look, it stands stock still without giving a reason for it, it gets down on its haunches, and even lies flat in the dirt, when wit and ambition and pride are riding most grandly on with their noses in the air. But conscience is a safe creature, and they who trust to its instinct will come safest to their journey's end.

THE FALL OF THE CITY OF PALMS.



IN the valley of the river Jordan stood the city of Palms, — stern, rough, gloomy, hoary with time and the beating of the storms, vast in the extent of its walls, built of the limestone rock hewn from the neighboring mountains. Behind it, an immense range of crags, piled up to the clouds in fearful masses, jagged, split, blasted by the thunderbolt; blackened and scorched by volcanic fires, with frightful clefts in their sides; black caves, haunts for wild beasts and homes for robbers; hideous gorges, whose sides were white with the bones of

murdered men, rose the mountains from whose savage recesses the stone of the city had been dug. All that was horrible to the fancy settled on these wild, naked hills. The vulture circled round their peaks; the wolf and the jackal hunted their prey among their valleys; each glen had its tale of blood. A curse seemed to rest all the time on these hills, where no green thing ever grew; a curse which no sunshine of summer ever lifted; for the very sunshine of summer turns into hell-flames as it touched those gigantic heaps of adamant, and clothed them with fierce splendor at sunrise and sunset. Yet they seemed to hug the grim city to their bosom as an ogress might hug her child.

The city stood in the midst of a dark forest of palm-trees, eight miles long and three miles deep, whose broad tops made an eternal twilight on the ground, whose rich fruit made the air languishing with its perfume. The trees were the tallest of their kind; but the towers of the city stood out far above them, and made them look like bushes rather than trees.

Beyond the forest lay the long, deep ravine of

the Jordan, hot and sickly, covered with rich and luxuriant vegetation, its corn-fields ripened fast in the sun, its gardens, bright with roses and musical with the humming bees, were brimming over with luscious fruits. There the wheat harvest nodded white. There the balsam dropped its green nut, fat with fragrant and healing oil; the knotty stem of the sycamore supplied the hardest wood for building, and in its wide-spread branches grew countless figs; and in branches of the cypress-tree the nightingale sang its mournful song. Two great fountains gushing from the rocks on either side of the city watered the valley so bountifully that it was called the "divine land." But men sickened and died there from the moist heat which steamed up from the ground, and spread disease over the region which was in every other way so fair.

Beyond the valley flowed the swift river, hurrying from the northern hills to the Dead Sea, which lay, still, leaden, dismal in its blasted basin of stone. This sea was supposed to roll over the cursed and engulfed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Its waters were bitter with salt; and from

their surface rose in the sunshine clouds of vapor, as if from the steaming caldron of hell. Around it all was desolation, as far as the eye could see. Pale, ashy hills, bare and forlorn, piled one on another, looked as if they had been heaped in confusion over the doomed cities, a horrid monument of their desolation. A stillness, unbroken by singing bird or humming fly, reigned over the whole region. The earth bore no grass; the dry sand allowed no weed to peep through its arid bed. A few horrid trees, black with the weather, and charred as if by the fires of the pit below, stretched out their gaunt skeleton arms, here and there, over the margin of the lake of death, and looked as if they were silently dripping into the water the remainder of the old curse. No marine shell lay on that shore, giving sign that even the lowest forms of life had been there; the water held no fish, — the fish that came down with the Jordan stream died on touching that salt flood. No sea-weed fringed the ghastly rocks, or lent so much as the saddest tinge of green to the grim, volcanic stones that lay about. Great patches of salt glistened ghostly in the light. On the southern bor-

der a vast mountain of salt rose like a phantom mountain, as if in derision of forest-covered hills. Over the face of a precipice, on the eastern shore, streams of pitch ran down, stiffened, hardened, formed in masses, which broke off and fell into the sea. In many places, huge black lumps of pitch found their way up from the bottom, and floated on the surface, looking like carcasses of oxen. Heaps of drift-wood, brought by freshets from the mountains or rolled down by the Jordan's floods, added to the waste aspect of the shore, and told that nothing was to be found there save ruins, — that few things came there till they were dead; that living things died when they came.

Such was the City of Palms, or rather such was the scene about it. The city itself was wild and savage as the country in which it stood. It was built by kings who were robbers themselves, and who feared robbers. Its massy gates bade defiance to any power of man; its thick walls could not be shaken by an assault from the outside; long slits in them gave room for archers to shoot their arrows at an approaching enemy. In the

city, like a spider crouching in the middle of his web, crouched the king of the region, having his eyes on all sides, watching for prey. He lived in savage splendor in his immense halls, which were decorated with rich spoils from the East and the West, gathered in from the plunder of caravans and the conquest of neighboring lands. His treasure-houses were filled with solid bars of gold and silver, bags of copper and other useful metals, bales of costly stuffs from princely cities in Mesopotamia and the towns bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Around the king were his men of war, scarred in many bloody fights; they feasted at his table, and guarded his gates, and were ready at a moment's call to go out and do any kind of wicked deed. The city had plenty of rich merchants who added to its wealth; fine workmen, goldsmiths, silversmiths, and smiths of all sorts; builders, artists, laborers in wood and stone, who lived there because they found work to do for the king and the nobles. But every stranger who came there was closely watched, as if he were an enemy. Two Hebrews who found their way inside the gates were forced to hide themselves

in a miserable house near the wall to save their lives. The woman who owned the house took pity on them, covered them up with the thatch on the roof, put their pursuers on a false scent, and when it was dark let them down from the window by a cord. Then they gladly made their escape to the mountains behind the city.

Against this terrible City of Palms came up the army of the Israelites. They were numerous as the trees in the palm grove, swift of foot, strong of hand, quick of eye, skilful to wield the sword, hurl the spear, shoot the arrow from the bow. In the open plain nothing could stand against them; even chariots and horsemen were scattered like chaff, and beaten like dust under their feet. Rivers did not stop their march; mountains put no obstacle in their way. They could live on the food of the desert. But what could they do against these huge walls of stone, against these huge gates of brass? They had no cannon, they had no machines which could throw immense masses of rock, they had no battering-rams with mighty weights of brass, they had no ladders to scale the towers. Their arrows glanced harmlessly from

the parapets, and their darts fell innocent to the ground after they had flown a little way into the air. From the summit of the citadel the king and his nobles looked out and laughed at the vain efforts of the besiegers. They would not go out to fight them in the valley. Why should they when they were perfectly safe inside the town, and the enemy, if they stayed long enough, would perish of sickness and hunger more surely than by the sword? for the country was hardly rich enough to feed so great a host, and the river banks were unhealthy.

But one day a singular scene presented itself to the eyes of the lookers on from the towers. In the afternoon, towards the close of the day, the camp of the Israelites was astir, as if some great movement was afoot. The warriors came out in their war dress, but instead of forming in order of battle, formed in the order of a solemn procession; after them came seven priests in white robes, with huge trumpets of rams'-horns; these seven priests were followed by the whole band of priests, hundreds in number, of all orders and dresses; the holy box, which was the portable shrine or temple

of the Israelites, being carried in the midst of them. Behind the priests, with the ark, were ranged a great multitude of people, bringing up the rear of the strange procession. When the procession was formed, the march began in deep silence, the only sound being the trampling of the feet, and the blast from the rams'-horns which the seven priests blew into with all their might. Under the east wall of the city, the long line went, grim and awful; then under the north wall; then, turning the corner, the whole length of the west wall; then beneath the south wall to the camp again, which soon became still as death.

The next day, at the same hour, the same thing was done again, in precisely the same manner. The third day, in the same fashion, the march was repeated. The fourth day brought once more the same extraordinary performance. The afternoon of the fifth day came, and with it the ghostly procession of warriors and priests, keeping step to the music of the rams'-horns. The sixth day, to the wonder of the city, the spectral march went on. What could it mean? Were the Israelites magicians? Were they weaving spells round the city?

Were they making a band of enchantments about the walls?

On the seventh day the camp of the besiegers was alive at dawn, and before sunrise the strange proceeding of the previous six days was resumed. Round the city once, round the city twice, round the city three times, round the city four times, round the city five times, round the city six times. The hours went on; the sun rose to the point of noon, passed it, and hastened downwards to its setting; still the train went on, the priests blowing the trumpets all the time. The sun was about setting when the seventh circuit of the walls was finished. The vast host of the people was mustered out of the camp to meet the returning procession. Suddenly there was a halt, a silence of a moment, a final loud blast on the seven trumpets, and then a shout from the myriad voices, that rung out over the hills and plains, the placid river, and the salt Dead Sea, and pierced the desert, frightening the wild beasts miles and miles away.

Before the echoes had ceased to roll among the mountains, the terrible City of Palms had vanished; its horrid walls melting away in the twi-

light, like the baseless fabric of a vision. What an army could not capture, a breath had swept away.

"Is the story of the City of Palms a true story?" cried all the children at once.

"O yes," I said, "one of the truest in the Bible."

"But what was it made the walls of stone fall down?"

"The blowing of the trumpets, I suppose."

"But how could the blowing of trumpets make stone walls fall flat to the ground?"

"I think it was because the breath of holy men was poured through them."

"But is the breath of holy men stronger than the breath of wicked men?"

"O yes! because it is the breath of the Lord, and the breath of the Lord, you know, can make or destroy anything."

"But how? how? We don't understand," said the children.

"Well, my dears," I said, "I don't know that I understand much better than you do; only I know that it can and does, and that stronger cities than this old City of Palms have fallen flat when

good men blew on them. Thus not many years ago, on an island in the West Indies, wicked men, after many, many years, had made for themselves a stronghold, compared with which the City of Palms was a toy-box. Immense, powerful, rich, it grew age by age, till its size was tremendous, it covered all the island; it spread over other islands, between which the sea made immense streets as in a vaster Venice. The owners of this enormous city were the kings of England, who lived on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. The people who lived in it as its rulers were great land-owners, planters, merchants, whose splendid houses stood almost hidden in groves of trees. Proud, idle, luxurious, they paid large sums of money to have laws made in England to suit themselves; they walled themselves about with guards of soldiers. These men bought men and women in Africa, and brought them to the islands to work as slaves. Cruel and hard they were; robbing the poor of their earnings, and growing rich on the labor of their fellow-beings. They had vast power. The government over the sea did what they wished; sent them troops, forbade all other people to meddle with

them; made people buy what they wanted to sell, and pay what they demanded for it; built forts for them to guard them against their slaves; did everything it could to build up their wicked city, and make it strong and wealthy. Thus things went on for years, as I said; and it seemed as if nothing that anybody could do would hurt these haughty people.

One day, about forty years ago, four or five men in England, plain men, neither high nor mighty nor rich, not kings or nobles or gentry, began to raise their voices against this iniquitous city of the islands. The sound of their voices was very much like the sound of the seven rams'-horns which the seven priests blew under the walls of the City of Palms, about as faint as that; it could hardly be heard by those who stood or sat in the high places. But they kept on sounding their note, — talking, talking, talking, without stopping a day. Every year they went all round the huge iniquity, men and women falling in and filling up the procession as they marched. They fired no guns, they hurled no spears, they only sent the breath in words from their mouths, — the same soft breath that you

send out when you talk. Year after year, for ten long years, they kept these trumpets of theirs blowing, while the great people on the wall — the nobles, the rulers, the rich merchants — laughed in scorn at their folly, and stopped their ears, so as not to hear the noise they made. At the full end of the tenth year, to the amazement of all beholders, the people set up a loud shout, that rung through the world. Men woke, one summer morning, to find that the horrid place of sin had disappeared. The walls had fallen flat, not one stone was left upon another. They were never built up again, and they never will be. Many great people were buried beneath the ruins; but the little people were saved.

"What threw down the walls?"

"Breath."

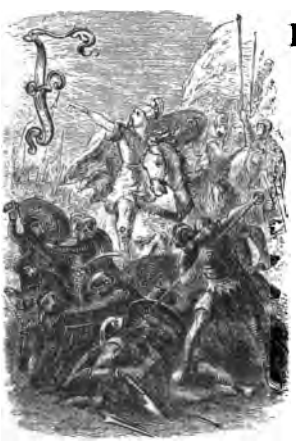
"Whose breath?"

"The breath of the Lord."

"Can any children tell me where and what this great city was I have been describing last?"

"Can any children tell me the names of the priests who blew the horns that destroyed it?"

THE ARRESTED SUN.



IVE mighty kings dwelt in the land of Canaan. The first was Adonizedec, king of Jerusalem; the second was Hoham, king of Hebron; the third was Piram, king of Jarmuth; the fourth was Japhia, king of Lachish; the fifth was Debir, king of Eglon.

Adonizedec was the king of the kings, the lord of the lords, the master, — gigantic in stature, huge in bulk, stalwart as iron in frame. No warrior like him in battle, no hunter like him in chase; no foeman stood before his arm; the lion dared not meet him in single fight. He wore armor of

brass; his sword none but he could lift; his legs were sheathed in iron; his brazen helmet caught the sun like a dome. All feared him, all bowed before him; his name was the name of Power. Strong and haughty as he was, strong and fierce as he was haughty, he demanded that all men should call him Lord, and should pay him tribute-money.

He dwelt on the top of the craggy rock Jebus; from which, like an eagle from his nest, he could look abroad over the country, and watch the coming of foes. On two sides of his fastness ran a deep ravine, the bottom covered with sharp stones, the sides high, steep, precipitous, with zigzag paths winding up and down. Often the little stream that trickled along the bottom of these ravines has run deep and thick with blood; often the craggy sides had been strewn with corpses, for in those wild times every king wanted the strong high place for a fortress, and great armies dashed themselves in pieces against its craggy wall. But the king of Jerusalem feared no common foes. He had built huge walls of masonry along the cliff; the mountains round about were in his possession;

horses and war chariots stood in his stables, ready for immediate battle; soldiers, fierce in fight, cruel, bloodthirsty, invincible, guarded the walls and gates. Adonizedec laughed at the kings of the country round about. They might all fall, yet would not he be shaken.

The second king was Hoham, king of Hebron. He was a monstrous idolater. He had idols in all his oak groves; on all his high hills were huge altars, the space about them, on every side, covered with bones of beasts and human beings that had been sacrificed to his bloody gods. In the deepest, darkest grove of his kingdom he had set up a hideous image of Moloch; a brazen image, vast, horrible to see. The inside of it was hollow; the stomach was an immense furnace; the mouth opened like a cave in the side of a mountain; the eyes glared in cavernous sockets painted red; the arms moved by means of springs closely fitted in iron joints; the hands were furnished with long fingers with spikes for nails. With these dreadful fingers, which were never cleaned of flesh and gore, the monster seized the victims that were brought to him, carried them to his mouth, thrust

them in, — and pushed them down, all living, into the stomach. There the fire consumed them; the raging fire that roared and bellowed, and flamed out of the mouth like a great fiery tongue, constantly asking for food. When the hateful idol ate, the king and his nobles stood by with bended head, and there was a tremendous clatter of drums, braying of trumpets, and yelling of songs to drown the shrieks of the poor victims roasting in the furnace.

The victims were children; the fattest, fairest, loveliest that could be found. Every mother in king Hoham's realm cried when her child was born, for fear its beauty might entitle it to the cruel honor of being eaten by the idol. There was a perpetual wail of agony through the kingdom. But Hoham was unsparing. He took the first-born and the finest. He made his own children pass through the fire when he was threatened with a special danger, and was anxious to gain the god's good will by a meal of peculiar delicacy. There was nothing too good for the beastly image, who never gave anything, did anything, or was anything but a great stomach of

brass, big enough to hold all that was holiest and purest and sweetest on the earth. Such was king Hoham. Sitting on a throne which was a bloody altar; surrounded by men who were butchers in the robes of priests: an ogre with another colossal ogre of brass to consume what he could not.

The third king was Piram, king of Jarmuth. Piram was a miser, — lean, skinny, haggard, ferocious. His object was to get all he could, — gold, silver, rich goods, garments, land, villages, cities. He plundered on all hands without the least conscience. His army was an army of thieves, that went scouring the country night and day, gathering up spoils for their master. They respected nothing; caravans of merchants, convoys of travellers, processions of pilgrims, — all was lawful booty that fell into their hands. They brought their plunder to the king; he had them placed in his store-houses and treasure cities. The men, women, and children he sold into slavery. There was no limit to Piram's hunger for gain. His eyes had grown yellow with gloating over the gold he had amassed; his ears loved no sound but

the clink of coin; the feeling of his treasures had worn the flesh from his fingers, and the watching of them wasted his body. His mind could entertain but one thought, the thought of increasing his piles; his heart was so overloaded with the love of pelf, that no charities could creep out; he was too avaricious to spend on palaces, forts, cities; he was too mean to spend on religion; he found idolatry costly. But he kept a large army to guard his treasure; and woe betide the leader or the king who might be so bold as to attack king Piram.

The fourth king was Japhia, king of Lachish. Very different from the three just described was Japhia. He did not care for power; he did not care for wealth; he was no hideous idol worshipper. Japhia was a huge eater and drinker, a monstrous glutton and sot. He had abundant vineyards, yielding the most luscious grapes for wine; he had immense pastures for fattening cattle, and immense shambles where they were killed, and mammoth kitchens where they were cooked, and great heavy tables on which they were set to be eaten with brutal jollity. His nights were a long and

continuous carouse. A disgusting creature he was; a giant, bloated, coarse, flabby. He liked the smell of blood, — not satisfied with the meat of oxen, sheep, lambs, kids, calves, he hungered for human flesh, and esteemed the tender bodies of little children a delicacy richer than any in the world; and when their blood was mingled with his wine, there was no goblet so large that he could not drain it at a draught. How cruel he was! His teeth were tusks, like the boar's; his voice was a growl, like the tiger's; his smile was savage, like the hyena's; his laugh was horrible, like the snort of the rhinoceros among the reeds. He hunted with a vast appetite for the venison; he went to war that he might have a taste of enemies' blood, quaffed from their skulls. If he offered sacrifice, it was that he might share his food with the beastly god and his priests. He was his own idol, his own Moloch. Instead of throwing delicacies into a stomach of brass, he preferred to throw them into his own. Japhia was the terror and the disgust of the land; but he lived and grew, and spread the borders of his kingdom, and few were bold enough to assail him.

The fifth king was Debir, king of Eglon. Eglon was a strong city lying to the south. Its king was low and sensual and luxurious. He lived in ease, and kept up a style of pomp among his pleasure-gardens. He loved music and dancing and gayety. The sound of the lute, the rustle of silken garments, the movement of sliding feet, was pleasing to his ear. The golden hours found him lying on soft ottomans, or lounging by plashing fountains, fanned by dark-eyed girls. His palace was rich in precious stones and wood brought over the sea in ships. Beautiful he was and elegant and winning, but more dangerous than a man clad in iron. For he collected about him the young, the brave, the beautiful; he feasted them, he fondled them; he sprinkled them with perfume; he dressed them in silk; he made them sleep on cushions of damask till their bodies became soft as the bodies of women, their hands white, their arms nerveless, their hearts timid and faint from loss of manhood. He loved not the fatigues of the chase; he feared the dangers of battle; he had no ambition; he had no courage; he would have allowed his army to melt away, if

the league of kings to which he belonged had not held him to the duty of mutual aid and support.

That aid was now called for. The messenger of Adonizedec had come, summoning the four kings to join him for a march against Joshua. Jericho had fallen at the blast of the Jewish trumpets, Ai had opened her gates, Gibeon had surrendered. Terror was spreading through the country. Treason was abroad. The five great kings must combine to beat back this common foe.

The great kings went up with all their hosts; a numerous and terrible army, — the warriors of Jerusalem, the butchers of Hebron, the robber bands of Jarmuth, the wild lances of Lachish, the brilliant cavaliers of Eglon. The plains about Gibeon were covered with the martial array of the mountaineers; and Gibeon trembled, for resistance to such a power was vain.

All night Joshua, the man of faith, the leader of the soldiers of the Lord, marched from Gilgal to Gibeon, — silently, secretly creeping over the hills; speeding through the valleys with muffled tread, blowing no trumpet, his mighty host of foot-

soldiers moving over the country, beneath the broad moon, with certain victory in their hearts and faces. They rested not, paused not, ate not, drank not, yet they were not weary. The night march brought them within reach of the enemy. The morning sun showed them the enemy encamped beneath them. The order of battle was formed speedily. The ranks of the five astonished kings lay before them, mile on mile, — the horsemen careering, the chariots thundering between. Joshua would lose no moment. The trumpet sounds the charge, the battle closes, there is the clash and roar. The war-cloud hides the combatants from view; but under it flows the stream of gore; out of it flashes the gleam of swords. Joshua allows no moment of rest, no break in the onset, no pause in the carnage. The work must be done, — done at once, done completely, and done well. There must be no second fight. These horrid kings must be conquered and slain to-day, to-day, to-day. The ranks of the enemy yield, they must be broken; they are broken, they must be crushed; they are crushed, they must be annihilated. "O for a longer day!" shouted Joshua.

"Give me but a few hours before sundown! Stay thy setting, O thou hastening sun! Show me my foe, till he is my foe no longer." Moments have to do the work of hours. Hours must do the work of days. One day must hold the achievements of seven. It does! it does! The movement of the Israelites is like lightning; their feet outrun time. Swifter than the seconds are the strokes of their swords. When the shadows fell on the hills of Gibeon, the great battle of the conquest was ended. The five armies had melted away before the arm of Joshua, the man of faith. The five kings, crownless, sceptreless, gashed and bloody, were hiding in a cave, awaiting the doom which overtook them in the morning.

A poem was written about this great battle, and in the poem it was said, that during that night-march the moon waited, and that during the battle the sun stood still in the heavens. I have no doubt of it. The moon always stops for those who go fast, and you may any time make the sun stand still by filling the hours with duty. The sun stands still when it is distanced, and it is distanced when you make one day do the work of

two. The longest day is the day that has the most purpose crammed into it. The sun does not decide how long the day shall be, — the will does. And if you can live so actively as to get a day's doing into an hour, it is the same thing as making the sun wait a day for you. With some men the sun gallops, with others he runs, with others he walks, with others he lounges, with others he stands still. But he never stands quite still, except when men are working hard, as Joshua was, to conquer the five lusts of Power, — Superstition, Avarice, Sensuality, and Ease.

THE END.

Cambridge: Stereotyped and Printed by Welch, Bigelow, & Co.